

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

Future

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WHAT MAKES A PERFECT GOBLIN? **ADRIAN SMITH** SHARES HIS ART SECRETS

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Welcome... to art without limits



Hello friends! The wonderful thing about art is there's no limit to what you can do or achieve. That's why I love every issue of ImagineFX, because every month we can glimpse a variety of exciting ideas and learn the techniques to bring them to life.

This issue's fantastical tour begins with the fervent imagination of Adrian Smith

on page 42, whose exquisitely detailed characters always inspire, as does Edward Howard's blend of Victoriana and big robots. His award-winning art can be found on page 54.

Our workshops this issue run the gambit of everything I love about our hobby. There's Steve Argyle's breathtaking cover art in which, on page 66, he shows how to add 3D into your art. Then Krenz Cushart shares his tips to lighting manga art on page 70, Łukasz Matuszek creates three backgrounds in Painter on page 74, while Roy Santua paints with only one brush (page 80). And the good stuff keeps on coming! Jan Urschel creates a sci-fi vehicle (page 84) and Michael Dashow adds detail to his steampunk portrait (page 88).

Finally, I'm excited to reveal we have a new website! As I write it's still in Beta (<http://beta.imaginefx.com>), but you must try it! We have a new gallery to make uploading and searching for art much easier, and we've added new blog and tutorial sections to bring you the latest skills tips, community news and exciting events! If you're a print subscriber you can access the Premium section, where we have all our back issues to download and read. Join in the fun!

Ian Dean, Editor
ian.dean@futurenet.com

Our special cover for subscribers this issue.



Contact us

Email: mail@imaginefx.com **Tel:** +44 (0) 1225 442244

Art submissions: fxpose@imaginefx.com

Web: www.imaginefx.com

@imaginefx www.facebook.com/imaginefx

Subscription queries

UK, Europe and rest of world

Web: www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

Email: contact@myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

US and Canada

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Web: www.imsnews.com/imaginefx

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX

EDITORIAL
IAN DEAN EDITOR
 ian.dean@futurenet.com
DANIEL VINCENT ART EDITOR
 daniel.vincent@futurenet.com
CLIFF HOPE OPERATIONS EDITOR
 clifford.hope@futurenet.com
BEREN NEALE FEATURES EDITOR
 beren.neale@futurenet.com
SHONA CUTT DESIGNER
 shona.cutt@futurenet.com
NICOLA HENDERSON STAFF WRITER
 nicola.henderson@futurenet.com

CONTACT US
POST ImagineFX Magazine, Future Publishing Ltd,
 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK
PHONE +44 (0) 1225 442244
EMAIL mail@imaginefx.com
WEB www.imaginefx.com
TWITTER @imaginefx
FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/imaginefx
DISC PROBLEMS +44 (0) 1225 822743
EMAIL support@futurenet.com
SUBSCRIPTIONS UK, EUROPE & REST OF THE WORLD
UK PHONE 0844 848 2852
OUTSIDE OF UK +44 (0) 1604 251045
EMAIL contact@myfavouriteimagazines.co.uk
WEB www.myfavouriteimagazines.co.uk
SUBSCRIPTIONS US AND CANADA
PHONE (toll-free) 1-800-428-3003
WEB www.imsnews.com/imaginefx

CONTRIBUTORS
 Steve Argyle, Matt Boyce, Nick Carson, Michael Dashow,
 Damian Hall, Richard Hill, Richard Hood, McLean
 Kendree, Stefan Krenz, Cushart Krenz, Francesco
 Lorenzetti, Łukasz Matuszek, Mark Molnar, Darren
 Phillips, Vinod Rams, Roy Santua, Elizabeth Torque,
 Paco Rico Torres, Paul Tysall, Jan Urschel, Jace Wallace,
 Henry Winchester
PHOTOGRAPHY Future Photography Studio
PAUL NEWMAN group senior editor
STEVE GOTOBED group art director
ROBIN ABBOTT creative director
JIM DOUGLAS editorial director
ADVERTISING +44 (0) 207 0424124
NICK WEATHERALL advertising sales director
 nick.weatherall@futurenet.com
RICARDO SIDOLI account sales manager
 ricardo.sidoli@futurenet.com
MALCOLM STODOLY London sales director
 malcolm.stodoly@futurenet.com
ROSS ARTHURS senior sales executive
 ross.athurs@futurenet.com
LAURA WATSON senior sales executive
 laura.watson@futurenet.com
MARKETING
LYNDSAY MAYHEW marketing manager
SARAH JACKSON marketing executive
CIRCULATION
JANINE GRAHAM trade marketing executive
RICHARD JEFFERIES international account manager
PRINT & PRODUCTION
STEPHANIE SMITH production co-ordinator
MARK CONSTANCE production manager
NOLA COCKEY ad production manager
NATHAN DREWETT ad production co-ordinator
MICHELLE ROGERS operational purchasing manager
LICENSING
REGINA ERAK senior licensing & syndication manager
FUTURE PUBLISHING LIMITED
STUART ANDERTON group publishing director
MATTHEW PIERCE group publisher
FIONA TULLY publisher
MARK WOOD chief executive

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 Chief executive Mark Wood
 Non-executive chairman Peter Allen
 Chief financial officer Graham Harding
 Tel +44 (0)207 042 4000 (London)
 Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244 (Bath)

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Featured artists

ImagineFX brings together some of the world's finest artists to share their techniques and inspiration for creating stunning artwork



Łukasz Matuszek

Polish freelance artist Łukasz first appeared on our radar when he submitted work to our FXPosé

section. Since then he's established himself as a fantasy and sci-fi artist working in Corel Painter. Łukasz creates cover and concept art for Solaris, Farwilds and Esensja. In his Painter workshop on page 74 he reveals how backgrounds can lift your art.

www.orthesa.net

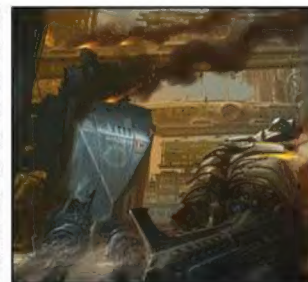


Krenz Cushart

An experienced book cover artist and illustrator in his native Taiwan, Krenz also teaches digital

art, often via his website. This issue the artist reveals some of his subtle tricks to painting a manga character with realistic but dramatic backlighting – a skill that can be difficult to master, yet can add real impact to your art. You can read his full workshop on page 70.

www.cushart.deviantart.com



Roy Santua

After graduating from Art Center College of Design, California, Roy began work as a concept

artist and illustrator in Los Angeles. Currently working on his first graphic novel, Roy takes time out this issue to explain his unique process of using just one brush for 95 per cent of a painting. On page 80 he shows how, creating a futuristic action scene along the way.

www.rsantua.blogspot.co.uk



Jan Urschel

Jan speaks three languages, including Japanese, and studied at Singapore's

FZD School of Design. Now working at LucasArts Singapore, the artist has provided concept art for the forthcoming video game Star Wars 1313 and several secret projects. This issue Jan explains how to create a larger-than-life sci-fi vehicle on a foreign planet, using photo textures, on page 84.

www.janurschel.tumblr.com



Michael Dashow

Michael is an award-winning illustrator and senior art director with over 20 years' experience

in the video game industry. He's also a huge steampunk fan who paints and, with his wife, makes his own themed clothes. This issue Michael designs a sexy but street-wise, female steampunk mechanic, all the while paying close attention to his clockwork couture. Have a look at the results on page 88.

www.michaeldashow.com



Mark Molnar

Mark is a regular in our Artist Q&A section, and has stretched his legs and taken his first steps into the

workshop section. An experienced concept artist in the film industry, Mark explains how to create a complex environment scene with characters, perspective and storytelling. He even incorporates a childhood favourite game – and a classic story. You can read all about it on page 96.

www.markmolnar.com



In progress

How this issue's cover art roared into life



The idea for a mechanical dragon, touched with Eastern style and colour, felt like the perfect way to usher in 2013. After contacting Steve, he revealed he had broken his hand, but this didn't stop him creating a 3D model of his proposed cover.



Because of his injury, Steve planned to paint over his 3D model. But as he began to work he decided to start from scratch, instead using his model as a reference tool. A handy tip for anyone wanting to paint a flying lizard! Steve sent us a sketch...



...before jumping in to painting it in earnest! Steve's choice of complementary colours – yellow, orange and purple – makes for an eye-popping cover. Choosing to paint from scratch lends his mechanical dragon an organic, loose feel. See more on page 66.



ImagineFX Cover artist

Few artists paint dragons like Steve Argyle or have the imagination to make them mechanical and organic all at once. A perfect cover artist!



Steve Argyle

COUNTRY: US

SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Maya, ZBrush

WEB: www.steveargyle.com

Starting life as a 3D modeller for a video game company, Steve took his bag of tricks and leapt into the world of fantasy art. Being a big fan of D&D, it proved to be a natural fit. Occasionally using a little 3D modelling mixed in with his exquisite 2D painting, Steve is now one of the industry's leading talents.



ImagineFX

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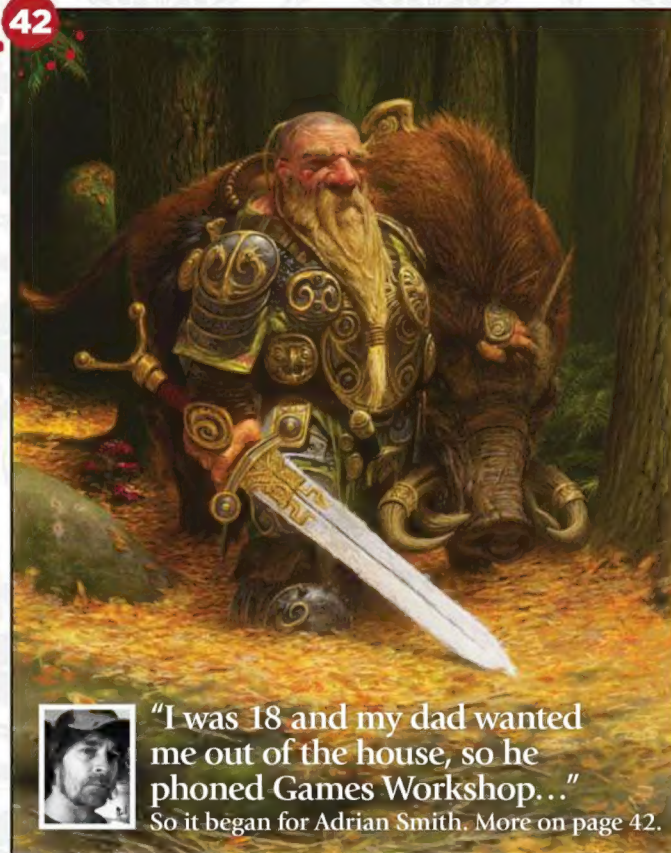
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"I was 18 and my dad wanted me out of the house, so he phoned Games Workshop..."
So it began for Adrian Smith. More on page 42.

Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



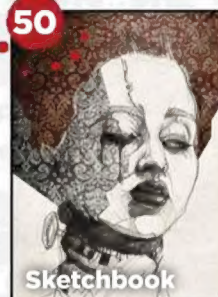
See page 8 for the best new art ➔



Using texture



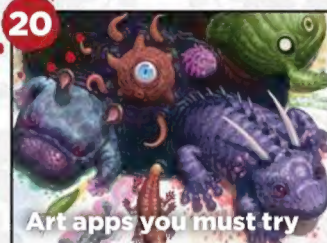
Edward Howard



Sketchbook



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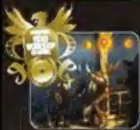
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Video workshops on your free disc...

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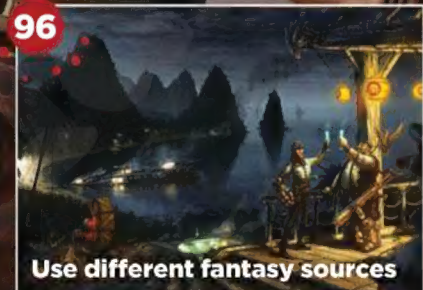


80



Paint with just one brush

96



Use different fantasy sources



Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Christina Hess

LOCATION: US

WEB: www.christinahess.com

EMAIL: Christina@christinahess.com

SOFTWARE: Painter, Photoshop, Illustrator



Since graduating from the University of the Arts, in Philadelphia, US, Christina's talents for illustration and design have

led to a successful career in the publishing industry. "I particularly love drawing ornate details," Christina tells us. Her passion for intricacy has enabled her to win several awards including the No Name Art Group award, Best of Show at Phillustration and the Silver Award for Unpublished Work at the Society of Illustrators West 50th Competition. "My work has also been featured in Spectrum, Society of Illustrators West, Exotique and Exposé."

Impressive indeed. In addition to her illustration and design projects, Christina also teaches undergraduate illustration classes in the Philadelphia and Lancaster areas.

1 CAT QUEEN "This piece was featured in Spectrum 18 and won a Silver Award for Unpublished Work in the Society of Illustrators West 50th Competition. I really enjoyed working on the dress and lace!"

2 JAMIE OF THE JUNGLE "This was a portrait commission of Jamie of Big. I incorporated many personal, symbolic items: she's surrounded by the wild cats she has worked with, the orchids she grows and a swan staff, which symbolises her totem animal."



ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Congratulations Christina - you've won yourself a copy of Exposé 10 and d'artiste: Character Design! To find out more about these two great books, go to www.ballisticpublishing.com.



Artist crit

Lauren K Cannon takes in Christina's range of art skills



"I really love what's happening here compositionally. The shapes and values are really well handled, balanced wonderfully against all the details of the image."

+ Vicky Yarova
LOCATION: England
WEB: www.vickyarova.com
EMAIL: vicky-yarova@hotmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop



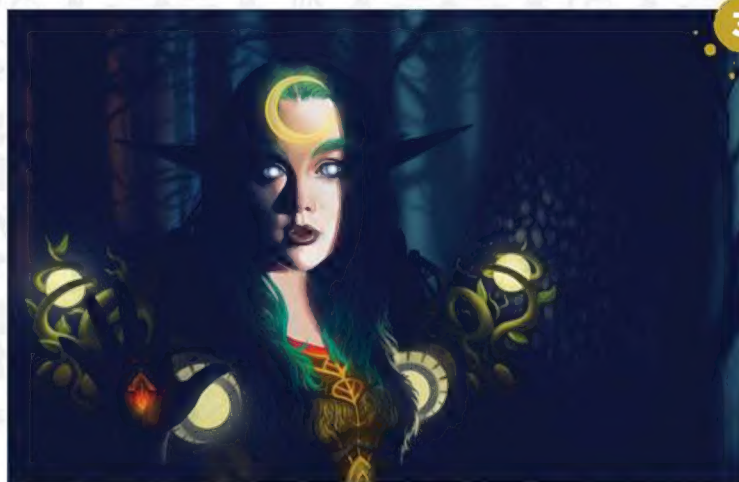
Currently studying Illustration at Camberwell University of the Arts, London-based artist Vicky bought a tablet four years ago. "It was a huge leap forward in terms of my art," she says. "The speed of my work increased tenfold, as did the quality. I haven't stopped working digitally since, though I still sketch in pencil in my sketchbooks."

After her studies she hopes to freelance as an illustrator and concept artist. "I'm working really hard towards it. I draw and sketch almost every day and I don't see myself ever stopping!"

1 COMMANDER RAINE "This is a portrait of a character I had been thinking of for a while. I wanted to depict her as both strong and feminine. I had a lot of fun with this image, especially the detail on her clothing."

2 EVIL INTESTINES "This image is part of a series illustrating the short story *Marionettes, Inc* by Ray Bradbury. Each image showed how different organs would look inside a humanoid robot. I'm very proud of this piece. It's bright and colourful yet sinister and creepy - a perfect combination."

3 SMOKE STAINED LOCKET "I fell in love with one of the druid gear sets from the Ulduar raid in *World of Warcraft* and decided to draw a night elf wearing it. I'm very happy with it, as it captured the elf exactly how I wanted - beautiful and mysterious."





DESIGNER'S CITY



"Jordi has a clear understanding of anatomy, which makes his creatures believable – particularly with the powerful muscles and sheer bulk of Punane. You wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of those nasty-looking horns!"

Shona Cutt,
Designer



2

Jordi Gonzalez

LOCATION: Spain
WEB: www.jordigart.blogspot.com.es
EMAIL: jordigart@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Jordi studied 3D animation in Madrid, Spain, followed by studies in classical animation and fine art in Toronto, Canada. "It helped me realise how important it is to master the basics," he says. "Programs such as Photoshop or 3D software are just tools – fun and productive, but tools."

His dedication to artistic development has paid off. The Madrid-based artist works for a TV VFX studio. "I'm in charge of anything to do with 2D, especially matte paintings and pre-visualisations."

Jordi is also keen to design creature concepts for videogames and films.

1 PUNANE "I wanted to create an animal that looked like a leader – a strong animal that has control over its territory. I tried different silhouettes, then defined the mood I was looking for."

2 PARJARRACO "I started playing with interesting shapes while bearing in mind creatures such as raptors and ostriches. I wanted to create a strong animal with a comic twist."

Shawn Conn

LOCATION: US

WEB: www.atomicdeadguy.com

E-MAIL: shantyshawn@gmail.com

SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter



Shawn grew up at the tail end of the atomic age, inspired by the likes of Godzilla and Hammer horror films, and

magazines such as Heavy Metal and Fangoria. After three years of art school and time in the army, Shawn began a successful career as a tattoo artist. In 2006 he returned to his first love of illustration and decided to tackle the digital medium. "When painting traditionally I paint very loose, using each brush stroke to build an image. Painting digitally gives me even more tools to experiment with."

Since then he's become a full-time freelancer creating art for books, magazines, movie posters, trading cards and horror-themed merchandise. He's also a senior graphic designer at the horror film production company HorrorMachine.com.

IMAGINEFX EDIT



"Vibrant lighting and a wicked sense of humour mark Shawn's work out from the pack. I particularly like his Vamp she-devil. The stark colours, limited palette and highlights lend this a fabulous pulp feel."

Tommy Lee
Editor



1 ZOMBIE E-READER "Getting to interject humour into what would otherwise be a terrifying scene is one of my favourite things to do. I do a lot of zombie art and it's usually pretty dark, so when I get a chance to lighten the mood, I have a lot of fun with it."

2 VAMP "Lighting and colour are two of the best ways to create a certain atmospheric mood in a piece, so I love to play around with it, as I did in this piece. The publisher ended up going with a mostly monotone colour scheme, but this version is my favourite."

3 DID I DO THAT? "My zombie art enables me to play endlessly with composition, mood and a myriad of scenarios. This piece was for a company that manufactures speciality products and it gave me a lot of freedom with the piece, so I was able to change elements until I was happy with it."





1

🇷🇴 Negrea Alexandru

LOCATION: Romania

WEB: www.alexnegrea.blogspot.com

EMAIL: wwritza666@yahoo.com

SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Bucharest-based concept artist Negrea realised art was his natural calling after he left college, where he was studying mathematics and informatics, in 2009. Since then the artist has graduated from the Timisoara Design College, Romania, where he studied product design, fashion design and graphic design. "At the moment, I work for Gameloft Romania and freelance in my spare time," he says.

Already possessing natural artistic capabilities, Negrea feels that joining the art group Crimson Daggers has helped further develop his talents. "I've started to paint while live-streaming and I study harder since I became a member."

1 PICTURE SWAMP ELDER "This was my entry for the Bloodsports competition by Crimson Daggers. The theme was Swamp Elder, and I had a lot of fun studying foliage, moss, murky water and birds. I learnt a lot from this, and was awarded second place."

2 HUMAN AND PET "This Crimson Dagger competition piece turned out to be a landmark in my drawing process, because it prompted me to undertake relevant reference studies. I managed to improve a lot in a short time while painting this image."



2

+ Olly Lawson

LOCATION: England

WEB: www.ollylawson.co.uk

EMAIL: ollylawson@gmail.com

SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Freelance illustrator and concept artist Olly certainly had a colourful childhood growing up in Africa. "I was raised by my diplomat parents in Africa," he says, "where I was left at an early age to be tutored in painting by an ancient hippo named Valo, who was at the time living in the Kunene River to escape from Angolan poachers."

Eventually, Olly decided to swap life in Africa for artistic pursuits in London, where his career as a full-time illustrator has flourished. "I'm currently working on two small game projects and hope to move to studio work in the near future."

1 DREAM BEDROOM "I often paint with friends who set different challenge topics. This one was Paint Your Dream Bedroom. The composition combines my love of art, music and cheesy sunbeams."

2 AFTER THE PARTY "This was another live-stream piece, which was painted in a single overnight session, with nothing to start with but a few abstract shapes."

3 PANTHER "I paint a lot on www.livestream.com with friends, and this piece began with nothing but an abstract start and suggestions from others. I'm trying to create more pieces that tell a story these days, but I still have a long way to go."



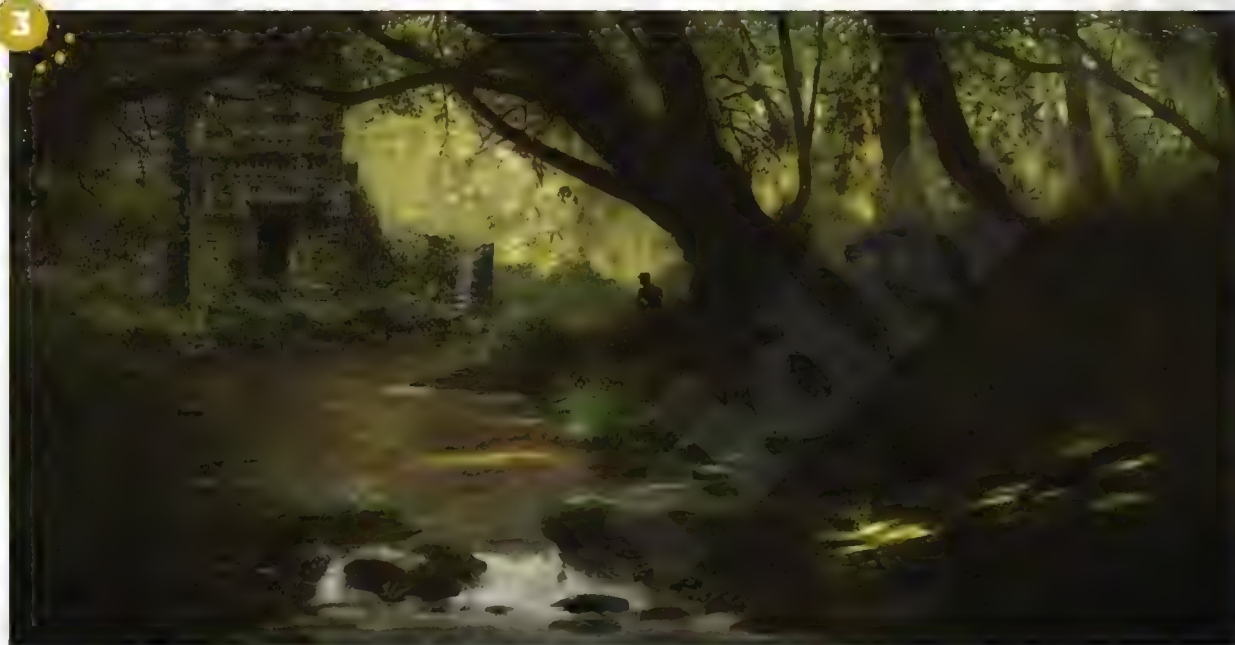


IMAGINEFX CRIT



"The obvious thing to say about Olly's art is that the lighting is exquisite. Just look at the motes of dust caught in the sunbeams of his Dream Bedroom. Seeing these contemplative compositions really made my day."

Cliff Hope,
Operations Editor



Sam Carr

LOCATION: Sweden

WEB: www.samcarr.net

EMAIL: contact@samcarr.net

SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Sam discovered his love for digital art after finding ConceptArt.org at the age of 14. Four years on, the English artist is working

as a freelance illustrator, with Dungeons & Dragons already on his portfolio.

"After I discovered the website, I made a sketchbook and tried to draw every day," he says.

Sam dropped out of art school as "it turned out to not be what I wanted" and moved from the UK to Stockholm. He hopes to continue to grow as an artist and has set out a "rigorous one-year plan" including regular freelance work.

1 CAVE EXPLORATION "I really love trying to bring classic fantasy to life. I also love frogs. This piece was really difficult, but I'm really glad I stuck with it. It shows a knight and a frog wizard stumbling across some hidden gems."

2 PRISONER "I created this after I realised I never paint anything elegant. It was challenging to learn how to hand-paint bricks and stone efficiently, but I feel this looks a lot stronger than using a photo texture."

3 BRAIN LEECH "Fear and disgust are among the most intense emotions, so it was fun to play with them. The brain leeches paralyse you, and then as you sink, they crawl down your nose and mouth and devour your brain."

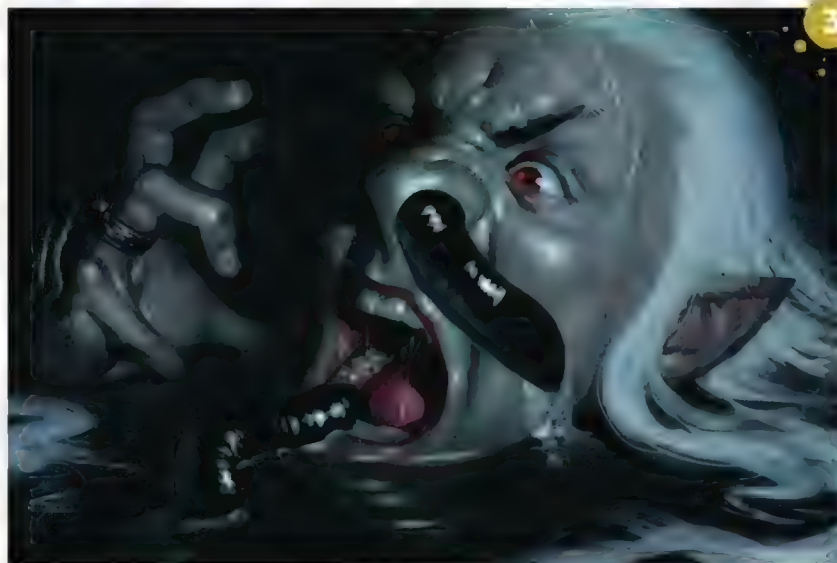


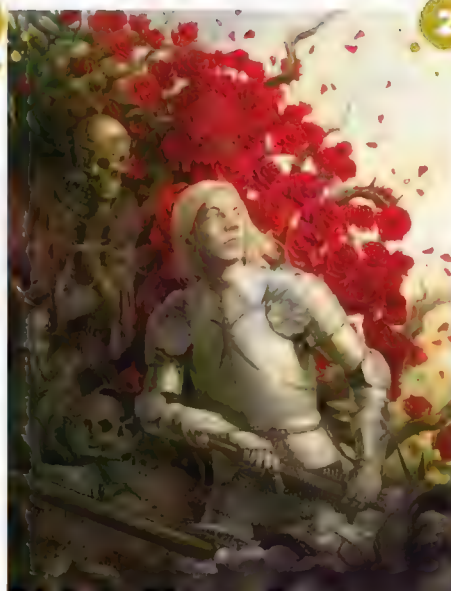
IMAGINEFX CRIT



"I love how Sam nails the panicked expression in Brain Leech. Surrounded by a black tar-like liquid, the effect is claustrophobic, helping us share the poor little elf's final, terrified moments."

Ben Neale
Features Editor





+ Jason Juta

LOCATION: England

WEB: www.jasonjuta.com

EMAIL: jason@jasonjuta.com

SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Artrage, Daz Studio, GMax



Jason is a freelance illustrator specialising in fantasy art. "I've been an artist all my working life. I learned to work

traditionally, discovering digital art after I left high school," he says. "I typically paint in Photoshop for commissions, but also produce personal photo-based art as inspiration when time permits.

"I'm working to branch out into historical work," he continues, "and hope to pursue licensing in future. On the side I hope to change the direction of my photographic art, and use photography as the basis for more experimental and painterly work."

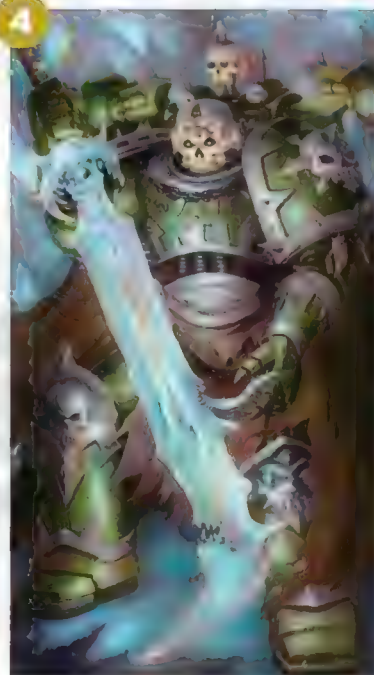


1 BRUJERIA "This was a breakthrough piece as I learned a lot about where I'd like to go with my personal paintings and subject matter."

2 LITTLE BRIAR ROSE "This was an entry for an ArtOrder online challenge, to illustrate a fairy tale scene. It was a great effort to paint all the roses but I think it was worth it."

3 EOWYN AND THE NAZGUL "This was another entry for an ArtOrder challenge, to illustrate a Lord of the Rings scene. I worked hard on the Witch-king's steed, the best way to get a personal vision into the image. It's the most complex piece I've done."

4 BLACK CRUSADE CHAPTER PLATE "This image was for Fantasy Flight Games' Black Crusade RPG. A Chaos space marine inspects a daemonic weapon - nothing could be more of a pleasure to paint!"



+ Ricardo Bessa

LOCATION: England

WEB: www.ricardobessa.com

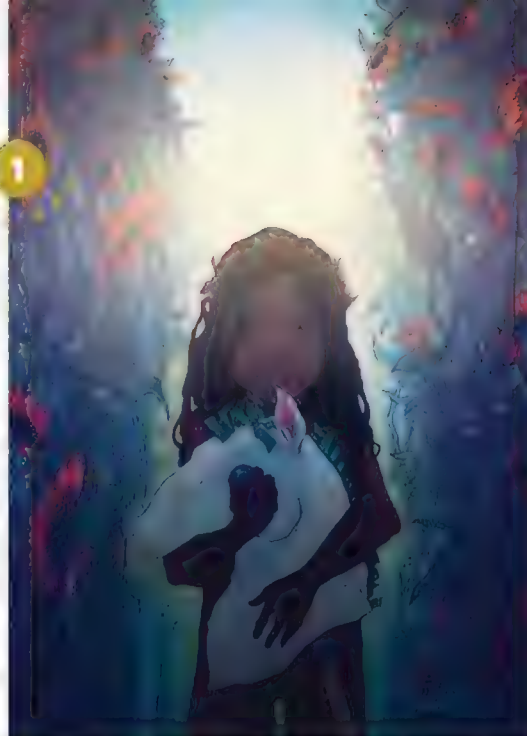
EMAIL: rbessa.art@gmail.com

SOFTWARE: Photoshop



"I've always had a passion for books," says Portuguese artist Ricardo. "I started drawing and at some point people stopped pretending to like my work and, apparently, started to genuinely like it! This was very exciting."

After completing his MA in illustration in 2010, Ricardo settled in London, where he divides his time between working and creating art, merging traditional painting and digital art together. "I love drawing people, shiny lights and colourful sights, and things that could never happen in real life."



1 THE SUN "For the Tarot, Mystics & the Occult exhibition at Light Grey Art Lab. Every artist was assigned a tarot card to interpret and I got this one – for once I got an excuse to overdo my light effects!"

2 HER-MY-OH-NEE "Done for the Girls: Fact + Fiction show at Light Grey Art Lab. I hid six clues relating to [Harry Potter actress] Hermione Granger in the drawing. To get the soft feel of the lines, I went over them using drafting paper and scanned both layers together to get a smoky effect. The colours are digital."

3 THE PROPHECY "I'm really happy I decided to leave the blood unrealistically bright instead of going for a visceral red. There's something to be said about symbolic use of colour that I have barely begun to tackle."

SEND US YOUR ARTWORK!

Want to see your digital art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece of art, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them.
fxpose@imaginefx.com

SEND YOUR ARTWORK TO:

FXPosé
ImagineFX
30 Monmouth Street
Bath, BA1 2BW
UK

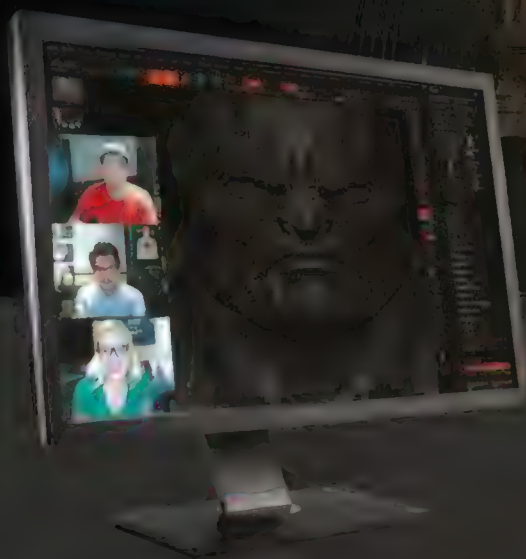


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gnomonschool.com

ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE FANTASY ART COMMUNITY



With SketchBook Pro, you too can create digital art like Bobby Chiu.

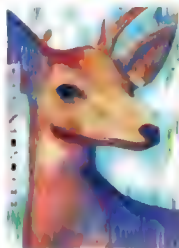


A new generation of art

New tricks We take a look at 10 of the best creative apps out there, which every tech-savvy artist should know about

It seems there really is an app for everything these days, and the popularity of smart phones and tablets have led to higher demands for creative tools for artists of all levels.

Whether looking for something to use while you're on the move or in need for a way to get your anatomy right, there are many apps out there that once discovered, may well become an integral part of your creative process. Take a look at our guide and see what you think...



Autodesk's very own Lena Le painted this using the iPad version of SketchBook Pro.

Drawing programs

Over recent years, many great drawing and painting apps have become available for tablets and smart phones. Here's our pick of the most comprehensive packages on the market.

SketchBook Pro and Mobile

Available on iPad (£2.99), iPhone (£1.49), Android Tablet (£3.11), Android Mobile (£1.24)

www.bit.ly/autodesk_sketchbook_app

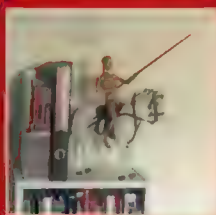


Autodesk's hugely popular SketchBook series continues to provide users with an accessible and satisfying creative experience. Both tablet and mobile editions are easy to use, with the tablet edition offering fuller functionality than its mobile cousin. The tablet edition responds particularly well to stylus input, although iPad users are currently able to enjoy an updated version over the Android edition.



WE'VE GOT A NEW WEBSITE

The ImagineFX website, launched back in 2006, has finally been given a major overhaul. Find out what's new, and why we like it so much! **Page 23**



BACK IN THE SADDLE

Not everyone has access to a horse and rider for reference. Stefan Kopinski's budget solution is a model of a man on a horse. Hey, it works! **Page 24**



BEHIND THE MASK

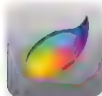
As an example of turning your designs into real-world objects, Vincent Cantillon's collection of fantasy masks ticks all the weird-but-wow boxes. **Page 26**



Procreate

Available on iPad (£2.99)

www.procreate.si



Many artists agree that Procreate has a unique feel. "It has an intuitive user interface and is super responsive;

rotating and zooming the canvas is easy and the tools feel natural," reader Matt Hubel explains. "It's the only app where I don't feel like I'm fighting the interface."

ArtRage

Available on iPad (£2.99) iPhone (£1.49)

www.artrage.com



Many of ArtRage's signature features have made it into the iPad app, with one of its key strengths being the ability to create digital art with a traditional visual flair, thanks to its dynamic watercolour and oil brushes. Likewise, the ability to customise your canvas means paint effects can differ depending on your choices.

ArtStudio

Available on iPad (£2.99), iPhone (£1.99)

www.iphoneclan.com



"ArtStudio is one of my favourites," concept artist Robb Ruppel tells us. He's not the only one. ArtStudio has

become increasingly popular due to its image-editing capabilities as well as digital painting tools, making it a versatile creative package. While its interface may not be as clear as other programs, the painting results are well defined, and the ability to export PSD files is extremely useful.

Auryn Ink

Available on iPad (£2.49), iPhone

(£2.49), Android Mobile (£0.62)

www.auryn.tv

Matt Hubel used Procreate and a Pogo Connect stylus to paint this impressive study of a skull.



Auryn Ink is a unique painting program in the sense that its sole purpose is to create realistic digital watercolour paintings. It replicates many factors that watercolour artists utilise in real life, including water dilution, canvas wetness and paint dryness. It's a fun way to create stylised pieces with a traditional edge.

Creative tools

Along with drawing programs, there are many other useful apps that could prove to be worthy additions to your toolkit. Here are a few of our favourite creative apps for digital artists.

Adobe Collage

Available on iPad (£6.99),

Android tablets (£6.99)

www.bit.ly/adobe_collage



For artists who prefer to gather heaps of reference material, Adobe Collage is a portable mood board that you can use to define the atmosphere and visual elements of your project before hitting the drawing board (or screen). Reference material can be imported straight from your tablet's camera, Google and even YouTube, and you're able to draw straight into your collage.

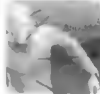
“Once you get a feel for it, Pose Tool 3D is a great little reference tool for digital artists”

Pose Tool 3D

Available on iPad and iPhone (£2.49),

Android tablets and phones (£2.47)

www.alienthink.com



Developed by artist Riven Phoenix as part of his life-drawing course, Pose Tool 3D enables artists to manipulate a 3D male or female model into any kind of pose. "On first glimpse it may seem a little bewildering, but once you get a feel for it, this is a great little reference tool for digital artists," says staff writer Nicola. It also includes an anatomy mode featuring detailed muscle maps



Pose Tool 3D is a great way for artists on the move to experiment with character poses.

Handy - An Artist's Reference Tool

Available on iPhone and iPad (£1.49),

Android tablets and phones (£0.63)

www.handyarttool.com

BOBBY CHU

Bobby's art is currently being used to showcase SketchBook Pro

What do you like about the desktop and iPad versions of SketchBook Pro?

SketchBook Pro is a program that I first started using back in 2004. The thing that I like about the desktop version is that you don't really need to use your keyboard very much. SketchBook Pro on the iPad follows suit and makes a lot of sense, because it doesn't have a physical keyboard that I would use in tandem with the brushes.

What do you think of the kinds of creative apps available on tablets and phones?

I think it's fantastic for professionals and beginners alike. It would be amazing to eventually be able to paint as freely on your phone or tablet as you can on a desktop computer. It would be much easier to paint on the move, and at least then we wouldn't be constricted to our studio spaces!

Do you think that artists will be able to use apps to create arts as good as they can on a desktop?

Yes – one day I think it will be possible. It's not quite there yet, but it seems like it's getting closer with every new software version or innovative new program. Eventually, I think that professional artists will be able to create pieces that are just as good as what can be achieved on a desktop computer.

Do you think that apps are making it easier to experiment with digital art?

Absolutely. Traditional painting is messy, and art software for computers can sometimes feel very overwhelming. By their very nature, apps feel so much more simple to understand and are less intimidating to use.



Bobby is the founder of Imaginism Studios, and is a creature concept artist in the film industry.

www.imaginismstudios.com

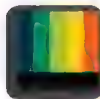
Continued from previous page...



Hands are the bane of many artists' lives, but thanks to this useful app, drawing realistic hands can become a whole lot easier. With further updates on the horizon, the app comes with a selection of 24 different poses that can be applied to left and right hands, modelled in full 3D. Its three-point light system means the tool is also a useful source of reference for working out where light would fall across your character.

Color Pal

Available on Android (free)
www.bit.ly/color_pal



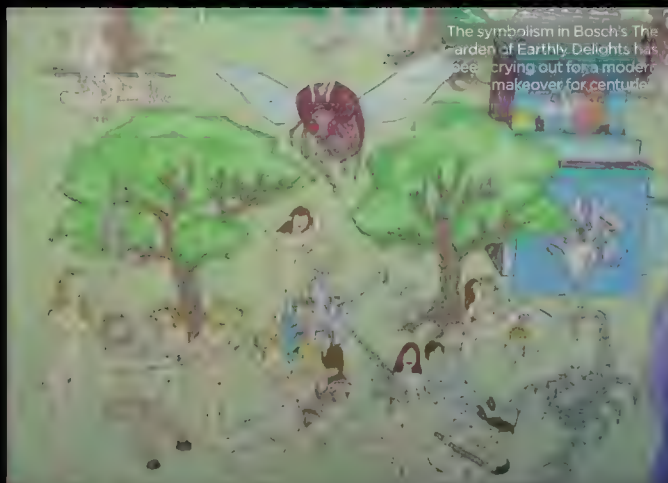
Choosing the correct colour combinations can be trickier than expected, especially when trying out an experimental new palate. The nifty free app presents users with a comprehensive colour guide, with all of the latest shades from www.colourlovers.com. It also provides HEX, RGB and CMYK colour values, together with the ability to browse through related colour palettes.

mara3D Facial Expressions Featuring Steven Stahlberg

Available on iPad and iPhone (£2.49), Android tablets and phones (free - Lite edition)
www.mara3d.com



At time of press, the full version of this app was only available for iPad and iPhone users, with Android customers only having access to the restrictive Lite version. Where the full version is concerned, this app provides artists with a customisable reference tool for facial expressions. Start out by choosing a specified emotion, and then tweak away until you're happy with the end result. The app also comes with a gallery of the works of fantasy artist Steven Stahlberg, which is a nice little bonus.



Renaissance man

Cutting edge Who would have thought that street art and Renaissance masterpieces would work so well together?

Street art is a genre that continues to push boundaries, and it's when you see art like the recent **Mythology** series by The Krah - aka Demetri Otinane - it's clear that there's much more depth than one might first think.



Fusing together the classical art with contemporary social-critique, Demetri's latest paintings use mythology to depict socio-political themes, crafted in the style of Renaissance masters like Bosch. "Back then, most of the art was themed, usually related to mythology or religion," he says. "I believe that every religion is mythology;

they're simple stories that have a meaning. I might be from a street art background, but the best way of expanding our sub-culture is to get influences from other genres - otherwise it all just looks the same."

The synergy between classical art and graffiti runs deep into Demetri's creative ethos. "I see my work like hieroglyphics. When people view my images, they can read them like an illustrated book without text. It might be because I'm dyslexic and I feel like every image is more than 100 words."

For more of the artist's work, go to www.thekrah.com.

Up in the clouds

Tool time Adobe's Creative Cloud gets several upgrades, including some unique boosts to Photoshop

Adobe's highly successful Creative Cloud service is expanding, and will now offer exclusive features only available through Creative Cloud membership.

Of the many new upgrades to Adobe's membership service, one that caught our attention is that with immediate effect, Creative Cloud members will be able to download additional Photoshop design functions and improved tools that won't be available anywhere else.

The service will now offer Photoshop CS6 and Photoshop CS6 Extended users Smart Object support for Blur Gallery and Liquify functions, customisable Conditional Actions (ideal for speeding up your process), refinements to the Crop tool and enhanced 3D capabilities, among many other improvements. There are also several updates ideal for comic or manga artists, including enhanced Type Style functionality to improve text consistency across multiple documents.

Creative Cloud will provide members with a hub for creative outlets, offering additional new features including updates to Adobe Muse and Edge, and an all-new team membership package.

Visit www.adobe.com to find out more.



New year, new home

Super shiny! Our website is changing, and we can't wait to get you involved

Since its launch back in 2006, the ImagineFX website has become an integral part of our community and with the New Year here, we thought it was high time to upgrade our current site for something a little shinier.

This isn't merely a makeover though: www.imaginefx.com is changing, and we're really excited to get you all involved. "I'm pleased our readers have a wonderful new



home to move in to," Ian Dean, ImagineFX editor, explains.

"The new site will enable us to give everyone more content, from daily blogs, art skills advice and new video tutorials. We've fine-tuned our galleries, and improved image uploading, as well as new search options that'll make art easier to find."

As an extra incentive for print subscribers, we'll also be launching a special new service offering exclusive content. "I'm also pleased we'll be able to offer all print subscribers a new Premium service, with online access to every back issue of ImagineFX dating back to issue 1!"

Visit us at <http://beta.imaginefx.com> and let us know what you think of the new site.

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Photoshop tutorial
Paint a sexy pirate heroine with Aly Fell

Video games
Antiquated Urbanism: Designing Dishonored
29 November 2012
Sebastien Mitton and Viktor Antonov share their experiences of creating the world of Bethesda's Dishonored.

Photoshop tutorial
Marta Dahlig's ultimate guide to drawing faces
22 October 2012 2 comments
Learn the secrets of painting a believable face, by using just a few easy steps. Marta Dahlig shows us the tricks.

Illustration
Draw realistic animal faces with Marshall Vandruff
19 October 2012
Marshall Vandruff rounds off his fabulous series on how to draw all aspects of the animal kingdom with that most expressive of bodily features - the face.

Illustration
Drawing animal necks and heads with Marshall Vandruff
19 October 2012
Marshall Vandruff tackles the business end of the beasts in the penultimate part of his great series

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CREATIVE BLOG NETWORK
TRENDING POSTS

The site will also have improved profile search options, making it easier to find great art.



+deviantWATCH

Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART...



Lady Symphonia

www.bit.ly/ifx-lsymphonia

We featured Lady Symphonia in last issue's story on cover art and her wider collection of work deserves some well-earned admiration. A beautifully crafted mixture of photo manipulation and digital painting, the artist's dark fantasy work is haunting, elaborate and highly original.



Alexiuss

www.alexius.deviantart.com

If there's one thing Vitaly S Alexiuss has a thirst for, it's creating nightmarish visions of the many kinds of apocalypses that could rise up from the fires of who knows where. Part sci-fi, part fantasy, there's bound to be something here to leave a strong impression on you.



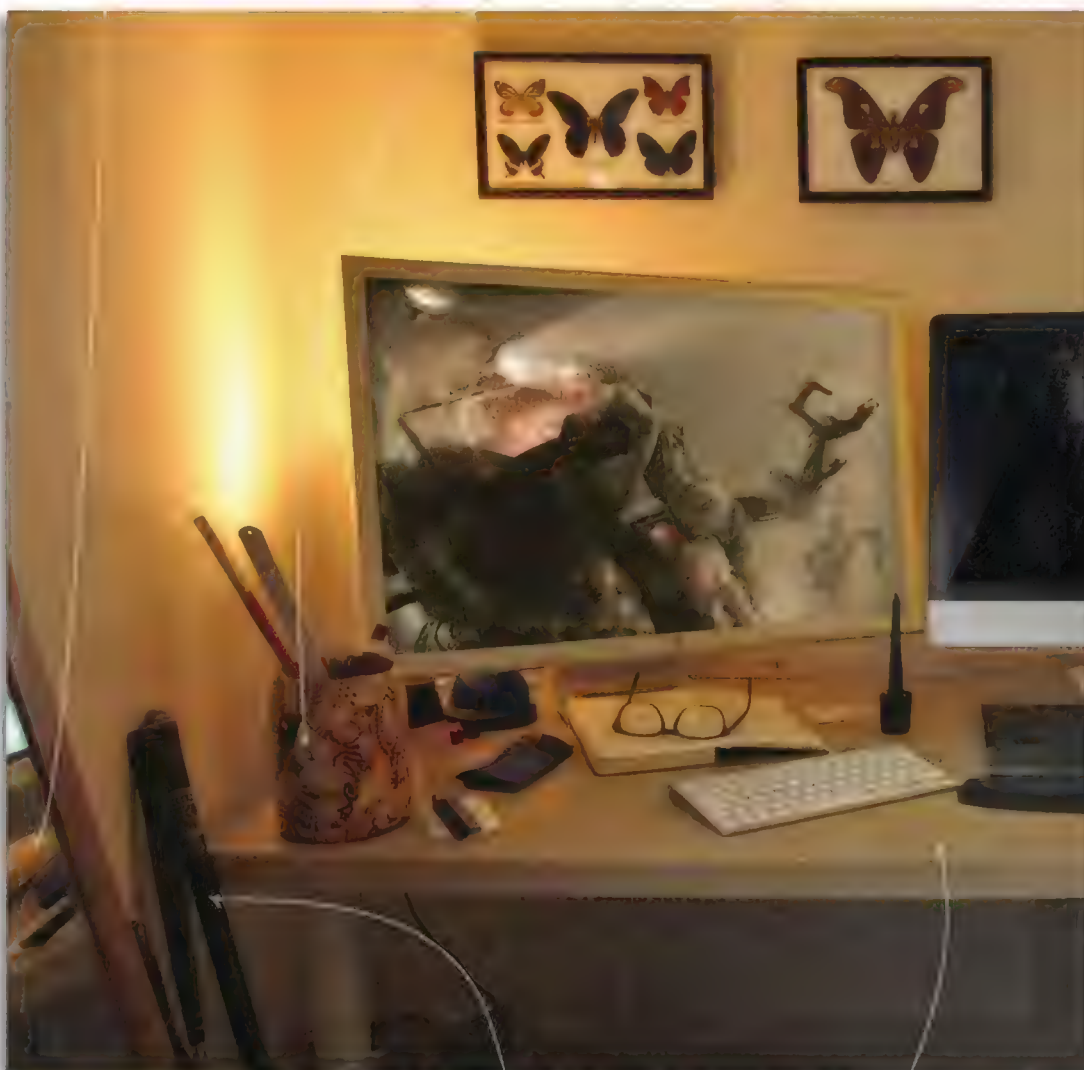
Quirkilicious

www.bit.ly/ifx-quirk

Even when it comes to serious compositions, there's a strong sense of fun to be found in Canadian artist Drake Tsui's bright and dynamic character art. His portraits are really bold and striking, but it's his group ensembles that really show off his creativity and skill.

The trusty mirror. Great for very quick human reference and checking those hidden mistakes in my work.

Not only does this make a great receptacle, but this is a little reminder of the bigger picture; the loved ones in my life who I really work for.



A few of my many props. Crucial for getting the grip and weight of a weapon right, as well as correct foreshortening.

Digitally, I try and tuck myself in the corner to alleviate as much reflection in my monitors. Quite often this means blocking out the lovely sunlight when it appears.

Stefan Kopinski

Happy balance Stefan Kopinski explains why his productive working space is also a source of inspiration



Due to a rather timely redundancy, I was able to get myself set up with a Power Mac tower and a Proxy Monitor as a means of getting the ball rolling. The tower was amazing at the time, but I soon found that the screen size was just too small.

After a few years of freelancing and keeping my tax bill down by buying kit,

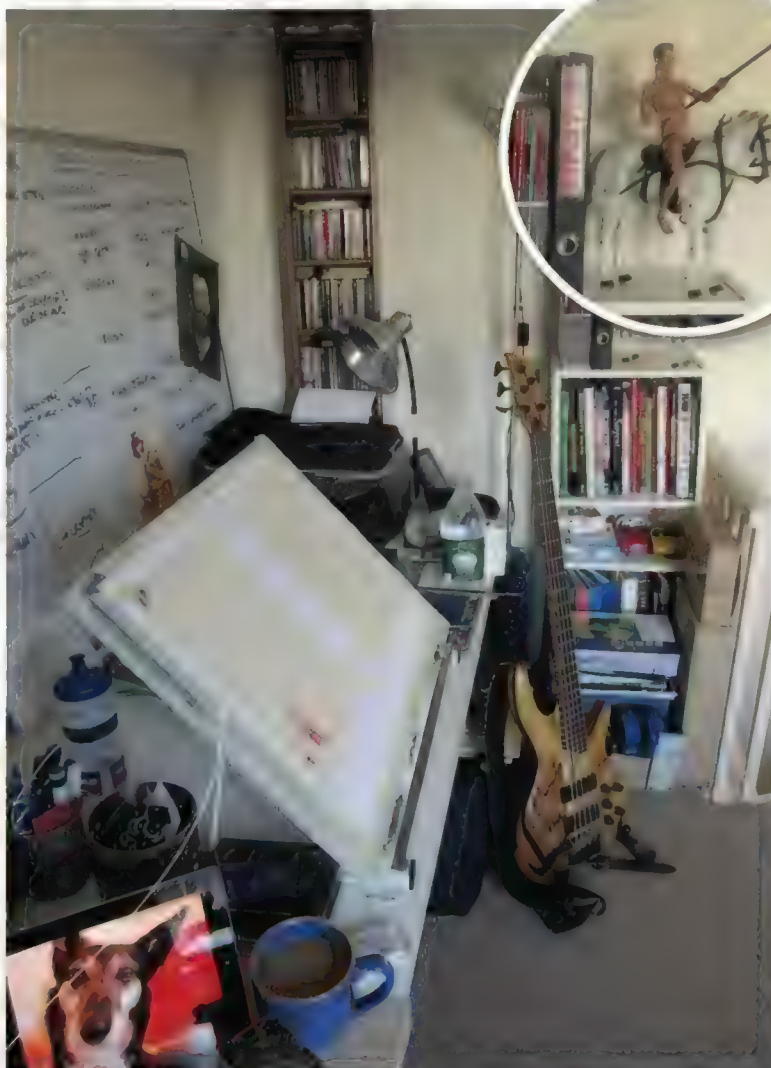
I ended up with this setup; a 2.8Ghz Intel Core i7 with 12GB of RAM! The 30-inch second monitor on the left is the screen I bought in the last days of my tower's time, and it's stayed with me ever since. I use this monitor, pretty much, purely for reference. By doing this I can use the crisp, main monitor of the iMac purely as a canvas. Working this way keeps the image zoomed out at much as possible, which not only

Artist news, software & events

I'm due for new hard drive soon. This has pretty much all my work and reference library on it.



Dotted around my studio I have a few token toys, which again, are very often great reference. The poseable man with a brush and a horse was a brilliant recommendation I've had for years. The cars on the shelf below are equally as old as the horse, but we won't discuss how old, thank you!



saves my back and my eyes, but also lends itself to working in a more traditional manner. Oh, and it keeps me warm in the colder months!

With this, I have a Wacom Intuos4, an external hard drive (for backing up) and an iPad. I use the iPad for quick photo and 'photobooth' referencing, so as not to clutter my reference monitor up too much. I also use a mirror on my left, for further reference but also for a quick glance, as a means of flipping my work to check for mistakes.

As well as this setup, I also have a Macbook Pro. That machine is used for working away from the studio, and with it is a Wacom Intuos3 and a USB-powered external hard drive.

Another key item I'd suggest for those long days is a cracking good chair. Look after your eyes and your back in whatever way you can!

Stefan is a freelance illustrator working primarily in the video games industry. Check out his work at www.stefankopinski.com.

On occasions I sit in front of a drawing board to correct my posture and remember what it was like in the good old days. I also have my trusty bass to remove myself entirely from my work and rest my eyes once in a while.

This is my bookshelf for commonly used reference and inspiration. This bookshelf quite often gets changed according to the job I'm working on; swapping books from my main bookshelf behind me.



PLANET OF THE ARTS



HERE'S A RUNDOWN OF THE EVENTS AND ART BLOGS THAT HAVE GOT US IN A STIR THIS MONTH. IF YOU'VE GOT A STORY OR EVENT THAT SHOULD BE FEATURED HERE, SEND US THE DETAILS: PLANET@IMAGINEFX.COM. CHEERS!

Nicola

Nicola Henderson, Staff Writer

ROBOT PENCIL

Concept artist | US

1 Anthony Jones to his family, the revered concept artist has created many incredible pieces of art over the years for clients including Sony, Wizards of the Coast and Hasbro. www.robotpencil.org

SUPER

Artist | US

2 There's a hint of Andy Warhol in the latest collection from Mike Mitchell. SUPER features images that humorously examine the iconic look of a superhero. Bonkers and brilliant. www.sirmikeofmitchell.com

VINCENT CANTILLON

Mixed media artist | US

3 Originally a trad artist, Vincent's exquisite masks-turned-sculptures have a cult following. Imagine a masquerade ball hosted by Brom, and you're halfway there. www.bit.ly/vincent_cantillon

LONDON ART FAIR

Exhibition | England

4 The UK's largest art fair is an opportunity to see art from established and emerging talent. It's at the Business Design Centre, Islington, London; 16 to 20 January. www.londonartfair.co.uk

4

© 2011 by Vagueste Vi Waking Coast



© St. Peter Blake, American (1960)

5



6



NEKRO

Blog | Spain

5 Last month we featured the Spanish digital artist in our story about book cover art, and you can find more of his artwork at his blog, where he explains his signature style. www.bit.ly/nekro_blog

BONGCHEON-DONG GHOST

Web comic | South Korea

6 It's never too late to stumble onto a new urban legend. If you haven't seen this already, this little horror comic by Korean artist Horang has driven the internet crazy. www.bit.ly/horang-bdg

Meet Esquisse, a talented sketch group from Auckland that's seeking to get people in touch with their creative sides



Esquisse

LOCATION:
WHEN:
WEB:



This piece was created by Mr Dewhurst during the Manu Aute Kite Day festivities.



Esquisse meetings can happen anywhere, as long as inspiration is to be found.



Another piece by the elusive Mr Dewhurst - museums make for excellent sources of artistic study.



From landscapes to university buildings, there's always something eye-catching for Esquisse members to sketch.

FANTASY SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX Forum

Winners

Image of the month

Sliver me umbers! Meet Cap'n RedBeard, the imposing Scottish pirate captain who won't think twice about tearing you a new one...



With a keen interest in pirates since childhood, the challenge to create an imposing Scottish pirate captain was right up Christian's street.

"My pirates tend to be of a more medieval variety, with some Warhammer influences thrown into the mix." Conceding, as the challenge brief provided details of the Captain's unmistakable red beard, Christian's took inspiration from Warhammer artist John Blanche in terms of colour and style. "John is a huge inspiration for me, and looking at his artwork also brought about the mostly red palette I've used in the piece. It was tons of fun to work on."

MYFX TITLE: The Legendary Pirate Cap'n RedBeard
WINNER: Christian Schwager (schwager)
www.imaginefx.com/schwager
www.bit.ly/myfx-301



Christian's lifelong fondness for grisly pirates made the challenge particularly appealing.

Once the brief was set, the first hurdle was to define a menacing but interesting pose.



After the initial composition was complete, Christian set about creating a traditional feel to the piece.



IMAGINEFX.COM



"Schwager's composition has a lot of interesting overlaps, the colour choice works wonders and the details tell an intriguing story."

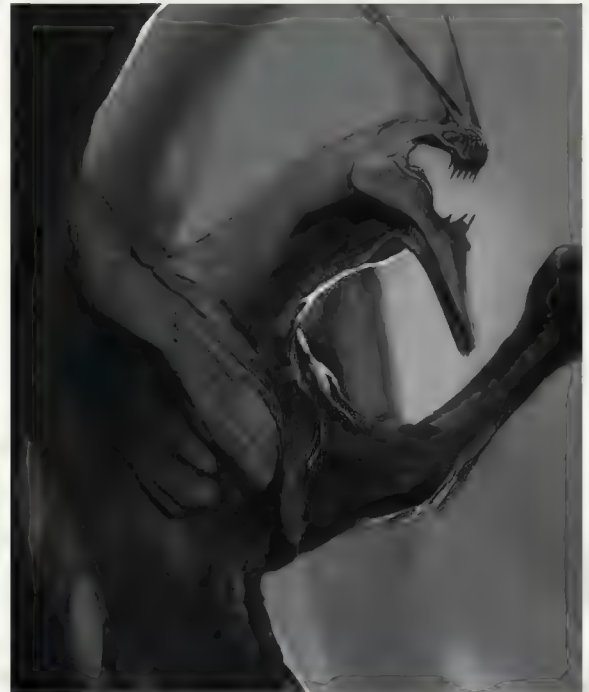


Join in!
www.imaginefx.com/myfx

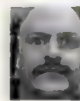
CHALLENGE: Disney's Star Wars
WINNER: Keith Seymour (kisu_shimo)
www.imaginefx.com/kisu_shimo
ALL ENTRIES: www.bit.ly/myfx-303



"I'm a huge fan of the original Star Wars trilogy, so for me the fun of this image was working out the details. Knowing that ImagineFX forum users and readers alike are going to know Star Wars down to the finest detail, I had to make sure the meditation chamber, the Anakin scars and the Vader suit were spot on (well, as spot on as could be when shaped like Mickey Mouse!). The detail continues throughout the poster design, down to the Drew Struzan layout, expression lines and pencil sketch textures. A little treat for Star Wars nerds: some of the body section is based on the lines and switches from the interrogation droid."



CHALLENGE: Chaos Dragon
WINNER: Ian Core (G8crasherboy)
www.imaginefx.com/g8crasherboy
ALL ENTRIES: www.bit.ly/myfx-304



"For this challenge, my aim was to create a creature that was not instantly recognisable as a classic dragon and had several key features that were grounded in reality. Recently I've been concentrating on form and value and with this in mind, I decided to paint this piece in greyscale. I find that with the absence of colour, I can achieve a more striking result and I believe this piece has worked well in this regard."



CHALLENGE: Streetfighter
WINNER: Toby Dixon (tbydxn)
www.imaginefx.com/tbydxn
ALL ENTRIES: www.bit.ly/myfx-298



"The Streetfighter challenge was great because, to me, the game is all about quirky characters with ridiculously exaggerated musculature, and what could be more fun to draw than that? I painted my guy in greyscale first, added the colour with a soft light layer, and then finished off with some adjustments and another normal layer for touching up. If I were to go back and try to improve it, I think I'd try to give some more attention to his outfit, which is a little plain."

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Ian Dean, on ian.dean@futurenet.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK



Follow us on twitter:
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www.facebook.com/imaginefx

Post about posters

Would you ever consider doing a film poster edition, maybe with Tyler Stout, Ken Taylor, Olly Moss, Laurent Durieux and suchlike? With the rise of poster art, especially film posters, and an article on Mondo in the Wall Street Journal there's a growing desire to learn more about this art.

Brian Davies, via email



With the help of Drew Struzan (see above), we looked at film poster art in issue 57. But it may be time to do so again...

Game for new artists

I'm a long time reader and subscriber and I adore your magazine. I thank you for constantly pushing the boundaries of content, keeping it dynamic and, most of all, relevant. I feel I learn something from every artist you feature. But there's one in particular I don't recall seeing in your magazine and his name is Miguel Coimbra (www.miguelcoimbra.com). He's the illustrator responsible for the artwork on the highly successful board game Smallworld.

As far as art for board games is concerned, you guys at ImagineFX cover trading cards, but some of the board designs in the current crop of big sellers, along with the icons and tokens, are incredible. I'd love to see Miguel give an insight into his techniques, or even read a feature or interview with the guy.

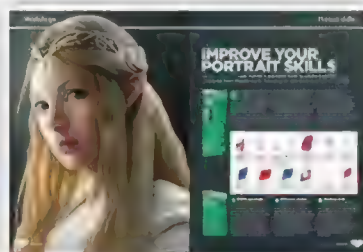
Bruce Kaiser, via email

Ian replies: I'm pleased you've found ImagineFX so useful. We try to bring you the best advice and art every month and will certainly look to include Miguel Coimbra in a future issue. We value every reader's contribution to make ImagineFX the best magazine it can be. Does anyone else have a favourite artist? Let me know!



DID YOU MISS ISSUE 91?

We've still got a few copies, but you need to move fast! See page 49 for details on how to get hold of one.



We promised you more Painter tutorials and Corrado Vanelli's in issue 91 seemed to have hit the mark.

Painter is back

Just opened my subscriber copy of the January 2013 issue. I'm delighted that Corel's Painter 12 is getting a bit of deserved attention. The tutorial by Corrado Vanelli is simply stunning.

John Malcolm, via email

Ian replies: Glad you liked it, John. We try to vary our content and software while making the core skills you learn in ImagineFX adaptable and useful in all media. They'll be more from Corrado Vanelli and Corel's Painter 12 featured in the magazine soon, and we have ArtRage and SketchBook Pro workshops in the pipeline, so keep reading and learning!

Make it happen

You were kind enough to mention my blog (www.bit.ly/ixf-zchicken) in ImagineFX in the July 2010 issue. Since then I've joined three projects – they're still in development so I'm unable to put this work online as yet. I'm making a serious attempt to become a concept artist and also have two comic apps through the Lush Comics website. Anyhow, it may have been a small thing to you, but your support has helped me quite a lot. Thank you.

Glenn, via email

Ian replies: Hi Glenn. We're glad to know ImagineFX did a little something to help you – and I've let Claire know, so she'll be pleased, too! It's wonderful to hear news of our readers developing as artists, finding their perfect job and meeting their goals, so please write in and let us know all about your projects!



Glenn has improved as an artist in the past two years and is now working on his own projects.



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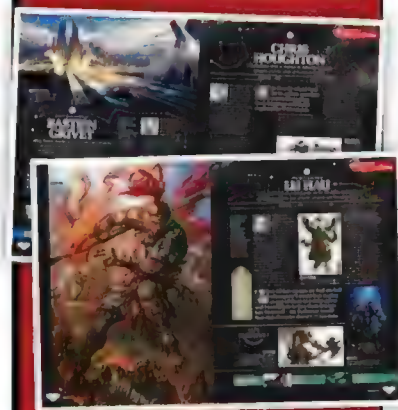
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Rising Stars reviewed

I can see why you opened up the age restrictions for your Rising Stars competition. After all, many people come into art later in life. But I was disappointed to see the competition has gone from being completely 25 years and under, to only having three of 10 winners in that age group. I guess I am concerned that the competition is becoming less about outstanding talent and is at risk of skewing in favour of people who have had longer to hone their craft, but not necessarily sought or received recognition until now. I especially question how Lee Hui, who holds a senior position with the company he works for, can be considered a rising star.

Calum Walker, via Facebook

Ian replies: The goal of our Rising Stars campaign is to find and promote the best new artists. But as you say, people come to art at all stages of life, and the old age restriction meant many new artists missed out because they found art later in life. We're constantly striving to make Rising Stars the fairest and best it can be, so you can expect some tweaks to next year's campaign. What do other readers think of Rising Stars 2012?



What do other readers think about the winners of Rising Stars 2012? Do you have a favourite?

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February 2013

ImagineFX



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Artist Q&A

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The
FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX
panel

Jace Wallace
 A Ringling College of Art and Design graduate, Jace freelances for magazines, books and produces concept art, including for Sims 3.
www.wakkawa.cghub.com

Mark Molnar
 Mark is a concept and visual development artist. He's busy doing freelance work for international film, game and animation companies.
www.markmolnar.com

McLean Kendree
 An ImagineFX Rising Stars winner in 2011, McLean now works at Kabam studios and has produced concept art for THQ, Hasbro and 38 Studios.
www.mcleannart.com

Francesco Lorenzetti
 Francesco works at Atomhawk Design as a concept artist. He works in traditional media and often goes to life-drawing sessions.
www.bit.ly/ifx-francesco

Paco Rico Torres
 Paco is a freelance illustrator, living in Spain, who's produced art for several card games, magazines, books and role-playing games.
www.pacorico.blogspot.com


Cynthia Sheppard
 Cynthia is a freelance digital artist. With a background in traditional painting, she likes to bring classical techniques to her digital artwork.
www.sheppard-arts.com

Elizabeth Torque
 An illustrator and comic artist residing in Spain, Elizabeth has worked for many American publishers such as DC, Image, Aspen and IDW.
www.elizabethtorqueart.blogspot.com



Question
How do I paint a ghostly figure who's in the background but is still noticeable?
Daniel Horsburgh, Australia

Answer
McLean replies

 There are a few things to do from the start. First you need to make sure the background is a dark value, so the glowing ghost will stand out against it. Also, be sure to paint the figure on a separate layer from the background.

There are ways to make a subject look incorporeal or ethereal. Firstly, be sure to make areas where we can see through the figure and into the background – keeping the background on a separate layer will make your job easier. Keeping a monochromatic palette for the subject

Use lots of soft edges to help make a figure look not of this world. A monochromatic palette is another good idea.

is also a quick way to identify a ghostly figure. Be sure to use lots of soft edges – too many hard edges will make something look solid and decidedly un-ghostlike. Lastly, hit up anything spiritual or magical in the scene with a Radial Gradient on a Screen/Lighten/Color Dodge layer.

In order to make sure the subject recedes into the background of an image, there are other things to try. If you have your subject on its own layer, or group, you can lower the opacity to diminish its presence. Keeping a narrow value range or range of hue can also rein in a secondary element.

Step-by-step: Painting a ghostly figure in a scene



1 In the first step we can see I paint the figure in monochrome. It's all on a single, Normal layer, so that anything in the background we paint over is still there in its own layer. Keeping your layers organised early on may seem like added hassle, but can save you a lot of effort in the long run.



2 I duplicate the layer with the figure, and play with layer settings and opacity. On top of those I make two more layers with Radial Gradients, set to Color Dodge and Lighten. I manage to keep a lot of the form of the figure, while letting elements of the background show through her – it's up to you to experiment...



3 Since we kept her on her own layer (or rather, in her own group at this point), we are free to scale her down and move her. I apply a Layer Mask to the group and run a gradient up from the bottom so she fades gradually at the bottom. I tinker with the opacity of each layer until I get something more subdued, but noticeable.

Question

I love Jace Wallace's portraits of women – how does he get different types of skin translucency?

Stefan Burnett, US

Answer

Jace replies



Thank you Stefan! Painting skin translucency is all about understanding how light travels through materials and what happens to that light when it exits the object. Warm and cool flesh tones are the result of sub-surface scattering. Sub-surface scattering is when light enters a translucent body, bounces around, then exits at every angle. This causes an inner glow effect and can be seen on a lot of objects.

In the first figure the skin isn't translucent. When light hits it it bounces off and keeps the same hue, with varying tints and shades. Since the light is only directly reflecting off the surface the shadows and highlights are sharp and harsh.

The second figure has a translucent surface. When light hits this figure it passes through the skin into the insides of the girl's face. The light will then bounce around in the muscles, blood and anything else there, before exiting in random directions.

What happens is the white light gets absorbed and the light's remaining colour bounces out. The hue becomes more saturated in the shades while the highlights remain less saturated. Highlights are washed out and since the figure is being lit from the inside, shadows become diffused.

Less dense parts of the face, especially the nose, ears, lips and cheeks, become brighter and more saturated.



These spheres show the colour difference between a non-translucent surface and a translucent one. The shadows are much more saturated in the translucent sphere. The colour selector shows what happens to the colour, from highlights to shadows, on different surfaces.



Artist's secret

SUB-SURFACE LIGHTING

A quick way to get something to look like it's translucent in Photoshop is to select a cool, bright colour for the highlights. Then, either on a new layer or in the brush options, select the 'vibrant' option. Try not to overuse this method though.

Question

Why should I work in black and white or greyscale first?

Zach Pfeiffer, Germany

Answer

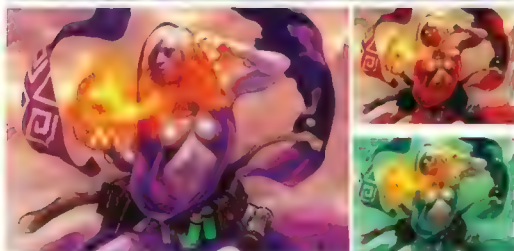
Paco replies



Photoshop makes it easy to introduce colour to black and white images using different layer modes, such as Color, Overlay and Soft Light. So creating a full-colour image from a black and white image is perfectly possible. But why start out in black and white?

Well, the main advantage is that you can easily change the colours of the image while preserving its shapes and light. That's a good thing if you plan to do colour variations of the same image. It also enables you to focus on the lights and shadows first, before the colour. So if you don't yet feel confident about applying your colours, it can be a good idea to start in black and white and solve the problems one by one.

On the other hand, doing this can make the painting process longer – boring, even – because you have to do the same work twice: paint in black and white, then go over the painting in colour. I wouldn't recommend this approach for speed-paints!



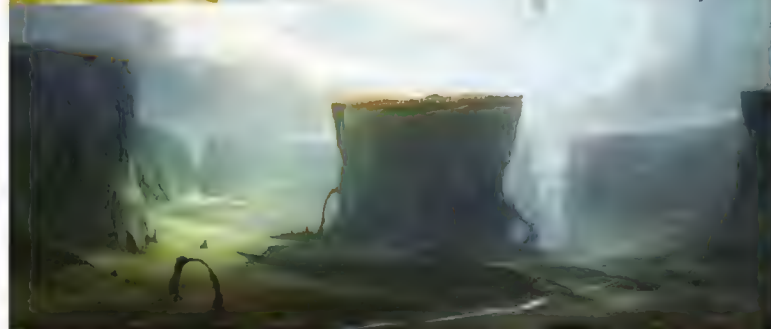
The black and white image is quite detailed, and it took some time to do, but colourising it was relatively fast, so creating different versions worked out well.

When colourising a black and white image, don't add just plain colours, or it may look weird. Instead, add different hues on every surface.

Question

When would you add more colours to something that's usually monochrome?

Martin Parlour, England



Here's a concept of mine that has been reclaimed by nature.

Answer

Francesco replies



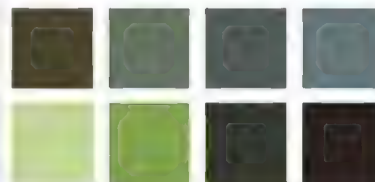
When I'm painting something monochromatic, such as a lawn, say, it may seem like a solid shade of green, but of course it contains many other colours and features plenty of variations.

An examination of even a small patch of grass will reveal glimpses of soil, clumps of dried grass and different species of grass and flowers. All these elements add different colours to the mix.

Light also plays an important role. Painting light and shaded areas creates a lot of chromatic variations. In this concept image you can see how I use a green/yellow in the light area, which shifts to a cold blue tone in the shadows. You can also see that in some areas I use a warm tone to differentiate the type of vegetation,

indicating where the orange-brown shrubs are growing up.

This is only a piece of concept art so I don't detail the grass and flowers much. I only play with the tone of the general mass of vegetation. This approach helps you to be more aware of colour choices when painting, and can help you learn which colours to use and where.



These are the colours I've picked for the grass. You can see how I use cold, desaturated tones to contrast with the warm, more saturated colours.

Question

How do I get long, greasy hair to fall correctly on a face as it looks down?

Phil Morin, England

Answer

Cynthia replies



The way that greasy hair looks and hangs is indeed different from clean hair. The main difference is that dirty hair tends to clump and mat together, and therefore has to be treated as a set of thicker, heavier cords, rather than a large mass with fine highlights.

The most important aspect that will make the greasy hair look like it's realistically falling in front of your character's face (at any angle) is that each hair strand must cast a shadow onto the face following its contours.

As with any portrait subject, it's always good to reference a live model if you can. That said, it may be quite difficult to convince someone not to wash his or her hair for a couple of weeks.

If you do manage to find a willing participant, try putting a little water or olive oil in their hair to give it the high-shine effect of being greasy.

In addition to that, you could add a little oil and/or sediment on the skin to complete the grungy look. That should give you a perfect sense of how the skin would react to the cast shadows.

Question

How do I paint realistic looking water in an environment, such as a flooded wasteland?

Mateusz Katzig, Poland

Answer

Mark replies



The key for painting realistic water in any type of environment is to generate believable reflections. In the case of a swamp or flooded wasteland it's a little easier, because there are fewer elements that could disturb the surface of the water and create waves. There are no underwater currents, and little movement in the air above the water because of the dense undergrowth. The water will cover dead and rotting vegetation, so any areas underwater are always going to be much darker than the environment above the water. Because of these factors the reflection will be clean and only the colour of the water itself will darken it slightly.

I leave the reflections to the last step in my painting process. I'm only blocking in the rough shape of the water surface with a solid colour. After I finish painting most of the environment, I'll copy out everything to a separate layer and mirror it at the meeting line of the main landmass and the water. I like to blur it slightly to give a more natural feel to the water.

After this I paint various parts of vegetation to break the smooth surface of the water – branches poking out, patches of plants, scattered duckweed and so on. It'd also give more realism if you create small islands to suggest that

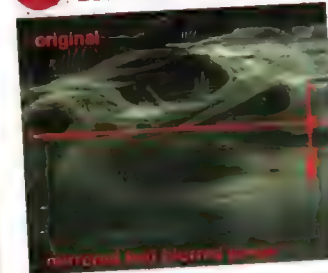


I imagine a space explorer arriving on a swamp planet. He's found the abandoned hives of the creatures who originally lived here. I want to create a mysterious image – something that brings up more questions than answers.

the depth of the water is uneven. The only thing you have to look out for is creating similar reflections to these new details.

I use a limited palette for these types of paintings, because there isn't any characteristic light source providing direct light. I use a mixture of desaturated greens and browns to suggest the plants and vegetation, and use a lighter bluish tone in the background to show the humid air.

Artist's secret

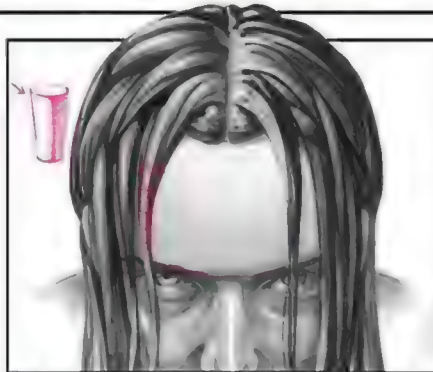


CREATE A REFLECTION
The easiest way to create a reflection is to mirror everything above the surface of the water horizontally and blur it slightly. I use the Motion Blur filter at an angle, which gives the natural feel of disturbed reflections of still water.

Step-by-step: Painting realistic greasy hair



1 Begin your image with a sketch of the character's head tilted forwards and down, and an area blocked in for where the hair will emerge from the scalp. From the scalp area, sketch thickly clumped strands of hair that each taper down to points at the bottom.



2 Think of each tapered strand as an independent cylindrical object and add shadows and highlights to each according to your light source(s). Hair is normally a collection of thin lines, but when grimy it should be clumped and shaded as separate larger shapes.



3 Add bright highlights to the strands to give it a shiny, greasy look. The final thing that will make the hair look like it's hanging in front is the cast shadows on the face. Remember that the edges of the shadows aren't straight lines – they'll follow the contours of the face.

Question

I want to paint a fantasy bear, yet keep its realistic look. Any tips?

Geoff Wong, Canada

Answer

Elizabeth replies



Before launching into a sketch of my character, whether human or animal, I try to collect and study a huge amount of reference material first – both photographs and video. This is necessary to understand the forms and movements of the character I'll draw. Eventually the forms can become exaggerated, and not resemble the reference material at all, but it's good to start from a realistic image.

When we talk about dragons or unicorns, we don't really need to think about the fantasy element of what we're drawing. It's right there staring back at you. But when depicting a more common animal tinged with fantasy – a bear in this case – then it's useful to weigh up the specific fantasy elements that you're going to add to the illustration first.

If I have the time, I like to read books on mythology and folklore, or get inspiration from the Greek gods, Celtic songs, or legends about Indian shamans and their totem shields. Delving into the past, I find that for many Native American tribes the bear is a sign of courage, wisdom, intuition and special powers. That's a great element

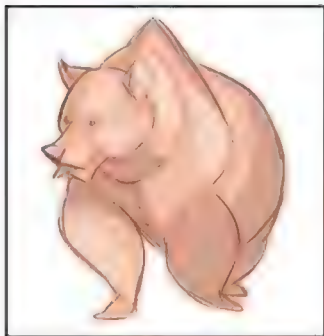
to incorporate into our fantasy bear.

I like working with Photoshop because it enables me to quickly capture as many ideas and change my sketches as much as I want, much the same with inking and colour. So here we go!

Visual references combined with mythology and folklore sources will help you paint a real-life beast in a fantasy setting.



Step-by-step: The bear necessities



1 I draw a quick outline shape to understand the perspective, the body shape, lights and shadows. This is a skeleton made with simple lines. Importantly, the cross is in the centre of the head and in the chest. Exaggerating the peculiarities of the bear make it a more appealing creature: I give it a huge round head, a large hump and rounded, very strong-looking arms.



2 Now I can comfortably draw on the skeleton of the bear. I define the details and I think about giving the beast a companion. A small, thin human makes the bear look even more stunning and overwhelming. It also tells us that the beast is smarter than the average bear, it's loyal to the human character and serves as a guardian, or perhaps a fellow soldier.



3 Now I start to colour the bear. For the fur I add a 'tinge' of dark colour, then some lighter colour on top (1). I then apply reflections of sunlight on the head and shoulders, before adding green reflections from the water and surrounding vegetation (2). Finally, I paint in a flash of light green in the eyes to create a magic link between the Shaman and the bear (3).

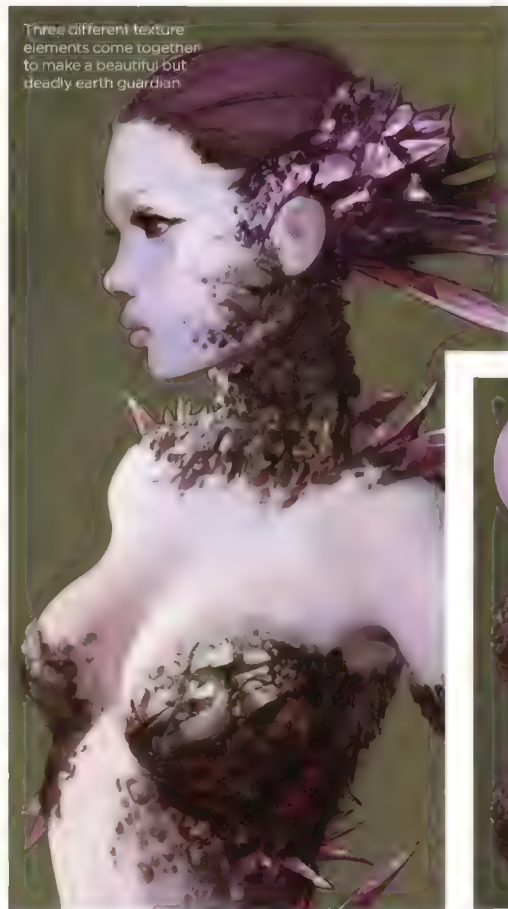


4 Now it's time to detail the scene. In the palm of the Shaman's hand we see a magic glow, like the bear's eyes (1). This also connects with the bear head on top of the Shaman's staff (2). She wears clothes that mimic the bear furs, on her arms, legs, neck and shoulders (3). To finish, I draw splashes of water to suggest the bear's forward progress with heavy steps (4).

Question

How can I use texture elements to create a striking-looking character?

Chang Lui, China



Three different texture elements come together to make a beautiful but deadly earth guardian

These spheres illustrate how the textures play off each other. On the top there is the skin material. On the bottom is a rock-like texture. The middle sphere shows how I could mix the two together.



Answer

Jace replies



Like most things art related, there's no one single answer. When it comes to using textures to make an engaging-looking character, I pick a couple that play off of each other. Textures are a lot like colour schemes. You can choose textures that are just varying shades of each other (such as a monochromatic colour scheme), or you can pick complementary textures to show contrast.

In this example I go with a complementary scheme with a few

different textures that contrast each other. The rock texture is based on jagged cliff edges and the skin texture is smooth and soft. I add a third textured object to complement the rock texture and break up the repetition. The spiky crystals are still part of the rock/earth theme while remaining different enough to stand out. Crystals have a transparent glow to them that's the perfect balance between a smooth and rough surface. The jagged edges also make the silhouette more interesting.

Artist's secret

TRACK DOWN TEXTURES

Without having any solid reference it becomes much harder to make a convincing character. I'll shoot my own reference for the pose but my favourite site to get some great texture reference is www.cgtextures.com.

Question

Can you show me how to draw someone losing their balance?

Tomas Pollock, US

Answer

McLean replies



When you walk forward, you pick your foot up from one place, move it forward, and plant it down. If you plant your foot down on a slippery surface, your foot may fail to find traction to stop its momentum, and will glide forward. Your centre of gravity will be off balance, and you'll most likely fall backward while your foot shoots out from under you.

To better understand the idea of balance, I've painted an example of a balanced stance. The red line coming down from the suprasternal notch represents the centre of gravity. Her weight is shifted onto her left leg, so the line hits the floor closer to that leg. In the second image, dropping a red line down from the suprasternal notch doesn't even come close to where her feet are – she's definitely about to bust her butt!



Fig. A

Just as a warning, the idea of dropping a line down from the suprasternal notch to find the centre of gravity isn't perfect. It works well enough as a guideline, but nothing beats trying to figure it out for yourself.

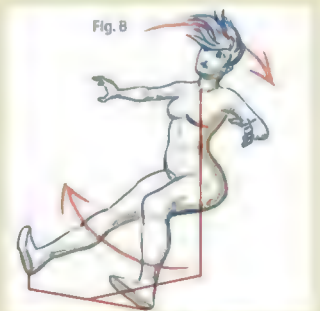


Fig. B

Note the cyclical motion created by her legs shooting forward and her torso falling back. Moving hair and clothing reinforce this.

Question

Any tips on painting an insignia design on a big vehicle?

Meredith Strathom, England

Answer

Francesco replies



When I come up with an insignia, I find it helpful to think whether it's to be recognised as a brand, a model, a company, or perhaps a military mark. And do I want to insert text or a name that matches the design? If I enter a name, should it be in the Arabic alphabet for example, or what characters will suit the overall mood of the image. Was the symbol created by an alien race?

Applying typography to a concept or illustration increases the depth and, in some ways, makes it more convincing – enhancing the appearance of the culture you want to represent. It sounds trivial, but it's not easy to create simple and effective brands that reflect the ideas mentioned above. We're going into graphic design territory here, but it'll be worth the extra effort.



I create the insignia on a separate layer, select the Eraser tool, set the radius to one, two or three pixels and delete parts of it, to suggest wear and tear.

One approach that can help in this situation is to think abstractly. Use simple shapes and straightforward designs, which help to make the mark read easily. An insignia can make the image more consistent and realistic when used correctly, so I'm going to be careful when placing them in strategic places without putting too much information on the concept.

Question

I'm having trouble painting tattered rags on my goblin. Where do I start?

Jeff Simons, US

There are a number of Photoshop tips and tricks that will enable you to paint ragged clothing.



Answer

Elizabeth replies

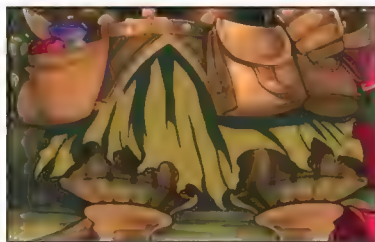


To add depth and realism to wrinkled or crumpled clothing I take the following steps. First, I choose the base colours for the

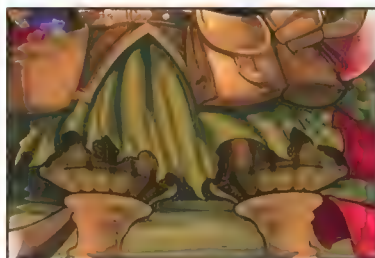
rags of the goblin, combining a clear and bright tone with a much darker, opaque one. Then I draw the pattern of wrinkles with colour, at 100 per cent Opacity. The drawing has to be completely flat, because we're currently only defining wrinkles of the clothing.

Now I lower the brush Opacity to 25 per cent. I choose the darker colour with the Eyedropper tool, and give a couple of strokes on the lighter shade. This should serve to get a pair of shades in between. I do the same again, but this time hanging on the dark colours. Thus, I soften the edges of the pattern, until the dark colours are cast in a soft colour range.

The final step is to add some light to the centre of the folds of the cloth. I add a new Soft Light layer and apply a few strokes of lighter shade to accent the bright areas.



Only two colours are sufficient to separate the white areas from the dark areas. To achieve more tones I simply reduce the opacity of the brush.



Different layer modes are helpful when adding light to your drawing, with the advantage of colouring without fear of spoiling the underlying colour pattern.

Question

How can I suggest a warm, tropical location in my art?

Lydia Jennings, England

Answer

Mark replies



Painting people in different climates is not just about painting various skin tones and racial features, although it could always help to strengthen your character. The key for designing interesting and believable characters is to think through how they adapt to their environment and hint at their cultural background.

There are several ways to make a character look like he or she is from a tropical location. I start to go through the materials my character could find in his environment as the base for his clothing materials. The most common materials used in tropical islands are the jungle or rainforest plants, such as ferns, reeds or flax. I could also use various accessories to suggest the life beside the ocean: shells, fish bones, pearls and so on.

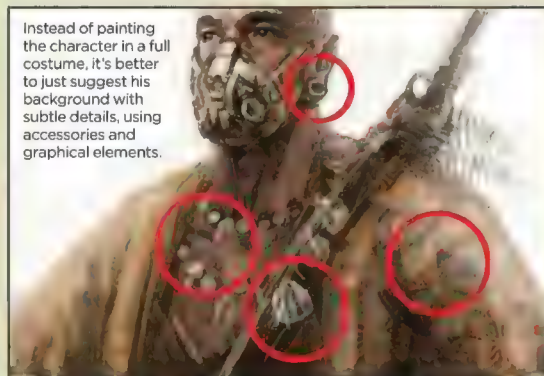
I add a light flax skirt, similar to the traditional ceremonial skirts of Polynesian tribes (like the Piupiu skirt of the Maori) and a light robe with a floral pattern that could also suggest the tropical flowers of the surrounding environment. I use the rough shape of shells and pearls to paint his jewellery, which also adds to the tribal look. I paint his skin to match a general Polynesian darker tone, but make him bald to make him look more up-to-date (short hair was common amongst men, but bald people were rare in tribal cultures).

After this I paint the extra accessories that add the twist to the story and character: the futuristic-looking but already quite worn breathing mask, and the spear gun.

I create a warrior who's able to catch fish with a spear gun, then give it a futuristic twist with the post-apocalyptic feel.



Instead of painting the character in a full costume, it's better to just suggest his background with subtle details, using accessories and graphical elements.



Question

**Please help me
paint slimy skin!**
Adil Banks, Malaysia

Answer

Paco replies

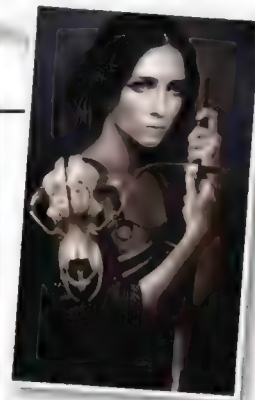
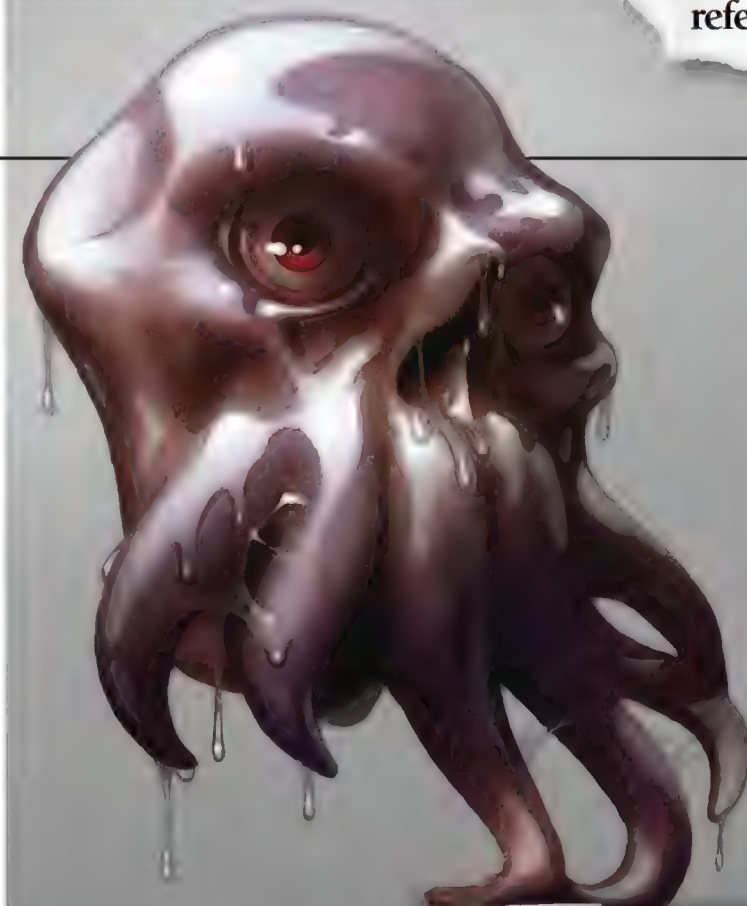


Painting shiny and slimy skin for an octopus, or any other kind of slimy creature, isn't a difficult task – if you spend some time gathering references, that is. A polished and smooth surface causes something called specular reflection. This means that light is reflected and bounces off in the same direction, casting reflections on the surface, just like a mirror.

The skin of a slimy creature isn't exactly like a mirror, but it has a considerable level of specular reflection, so the brightest sources of light, the nearest objects and the surrounding colours should be at least partially reflected. Properly depicting the reflections is the key to success here.

It's not too complex a topic, but if you're not used to it then it can be tricky to pull off with a degree of success. That's why gathering some visual references, such as photos of octopuses, shiny latex and polished statues, can be a great help. Not only to paint a particular image but to increase your painting skills by studying real-life examples.

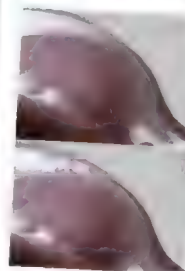
Other than that, you have to figure out how something is reflected on an irregular shaped surface. Try to imagine the source of light, and place the reflections following some logic. So for example, if the light source is a light bulb on the left of the octopus, don't paint a window-shaped reflection on the right. Paint them to accommodate the curves and shapes of the creature, and paint them with the right amount of luminous intensity.



To create the slime I apply some dark colour to the edges, keep the middle transparent (or extend the colour of the reflection) and add a white spot.



Painting a slimy, shiny skin is easy if you paint in a clean and organised way, and you gather information and references before you start working.



Artist's secret

DIFFERENT SKINS, DIFFERENT REFLECTIONS

If you're painting a creature with a smooth skin, its reflections should also be smooth. If you want to paint a creature with harsh skin, don't forget to modify the reflections according to the kind of skin that you're painting.

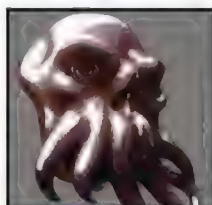
Step-by-step: Painting a shiny, reflecting surface

- 1 First of all, I paint the slimy creature dry and matte. I simply focus on depicting its shape, colours, texture, illumination and so forth. Then I start to work on the reflections. I imagine an



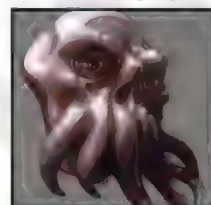
intense light source on the upper left (like the sun coming through a hole in the ceiling), so the reflections should be bright and more intense on the left.

- 2 Once I have an idea of what I'm looking for, I start to paint the reflections. I paint them in a separate layer, with a Hard and Opaque brush, because the reflections should have clean and



sharp edges. I bend them following the curvatures of the head, the tentacles, all the while trying to create fluid and coherent shapes on the canvas.

- 3 Then I select all those reflections, lower their opacity, and in further layers add more nuances (all inside the selection, to preserve the hard edges). I try to work using layers in Screen mode,



because then I won't hide all the previous work – the skin of the creature – and can correct elements using dark colours, which is easier than applying the Eraser.

Got a digital art problem? Is an image giving you art-ache? Our panel can help. Email your question to our experts at help@imaginefx.com or write to Artist Q&A, ImagineFX, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK.



ILLUMINATIONS

"This is the painting that I used for the cover for my new artbook. Using Photoshop, this is a good old fantasy dwarf - can't go wrong with this type of imagery."

THE ART OF ADRIAN SMITH

Things started to take off when **Adrian's** dad tried to kick him out of the house...



It took Rodney Matthews, a house filled with sisters and the loving machinations of his dad for Adrian Smith to even consider becoming a pro artist. (That, and a relentless passion for art and a shed-load of talent.) "One day in a bookshop I was doing my usual routine of desperately looking for an art book I liked," says Adrian. "I picked up a Rodney Matthews book and rather than go straight to the pictures I read his intro. For some reason it hadn't yet occurred to me that artists actually got paid to do this stuff."

Something about reading those words and hearing the artist's voice in his head morphed the unattainable dream of creating art for a living into something realistic, attainable. Adrian was in his late teens and his bedroom was already too small for the sprawling fine art equipment he was amassing. Furthermore, there was always a distracting storm being whipped up by his three sisters in the house.

So his dad knocked up a drawing board and put it in the coal shed attached to the house. Here Adrian marked out his space, doodling tanks and planes then increasingly more complex characters, fuelled by the images of his art books ranging from Hieronymus Bosch and Gustave Doré to contemporary fantasy releases.

"I realised I should photocopy my art and send it off to the publishers' addresses at the back of the ➤

ARTIST TIP

LOOSEN UP, DRAW AND MAKE A MESS

"I'm always surprised to find a lot of young, fresh-faced artists rarely draw for the sake of drawing. Some of them have hardly ever picked up a pencil (the wooden stick-type thing with a seam of lead running up the middle...) They jump straight into working digitally. You can only make a picture look interesting by adding layers of digital trickery before it all starts looking the same. So my tip is to draw. Get a bit more tactile with your work, get a bit messy and loosen up a bit."

A LOST ARMY

"A scene from book two of my and Hyung Min-woo's Eastania trilogy. I tried to get a feel of stifling heat and sweating exhausted warriors."

WEST PRINCE

Black and white, digital concept illustration for Eastania Westania.

EASTANIA WESTANIA

The thinking behind Adrian's striking East meets West-style warriors image for a book cover

This is a digital painting Adrian produced for the first cover in the Eastania Westania trilogy of books. "The books were produced for a small Korean company called Seoul Visual Works," he tells us. "This IP was devised by me and my friend Hyung Min-woo – the fantastic comic creator of the Priest series of manga."

The theme of the two adversaries facing each other across the page was one the artist would keep for the following book (see previous page). "It was a deliberate design that sits nicely with the logo top centre. The chap on the left was to portray your archetypal Eastern warrior and the chap on the right was to represent the West. I didn't want to try and be too clever, so went for the direct approach on the look of the races. The Eastern warrior has Mongol, Chinese influences with a European touch, and the West is a stylised version of a beefed-up Nordic type." Adrian painted the piece in Photoshop with just one brush tool, only working on two layers at a time. "I usually hate working on a white background but this time I think it suited the image quite well."

➡ books I had," he recalls. "I got no replies from anyone, apart from one company, Games Workshop." All things considered, this was a good start.

The fantasy table-top games company asked him to contribute paintings for its book *The Lost and the Damned*. "Just a small tester batch," Adrian insists. "These were done under a dim light in the coal shed. Anyway, I was 18 and my dad wanted me out of the house, so he took it upon himself to phone Games Workshop without me knowing." Adrian's dad got through to art director John Blanche, and simply asked if Adrian could get a job in-house. And it worked!

John saw Adrian's potential. An interview was followed by a trial period at Games Workshop and Adrian was thrown

BODYGUARD

Personal piece; oil on thick watercolour paper. "Oils are sometimes tricky and sometimes time consuming but always rewarding."



in with the likes of Steve Tappin, Paul Bonner and Tony Ackland. These were daunting, inspiring times.

"They were very nice chaps so I soon felt at ease. Working on *The Lost and the Damned* book was a chance to go crazy with my ideas," he says of the title that focused on Games Workshop's Chaos gods. "It was like Michael Moorcock with a little bit of John Carpenter's *The Thing*, plenty of Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* and a dash of whatever the artist has to offer. In short, I was very lucky, and I've got my dad to thank for it. Cheers Dad."

In his early 20s, Adrian's debut into comics came with the first British full-colour weekly, *Toxic*. Although initiated by Marshal Law duo Pat Mills and artist Kevin O'Neill, failure from a now-defunct

SMITH ID

Watercolour. "Armoured warrior. Nuff said."



APPLE WARRIOR

Cover for Korean publication Toxic. "It showcases comic artists, sculptors and illustrators from Korea and local countries, and sometimes the odd Westerner too."



TROLL GIRL

"Another personal favourite. I find drawing women quite difficult sometimes so I was happy when this one turned out well for me."



ABC Warriors," recalls Adrian. "He asked if I would be interested in doing a comic with him and Pat. I said yes before he'd finished the sentence."

The series of graphic novels Broz came from this chance meeting. Two were published, although Adrian feels that it was the third, unpublished book that held his best work of the series. The world of French comics offers artists more respect than the UK and US, says Adrian, but with hundreds of new titles published each month, it's just as hard to make a name for yourself.

JAGGED TEETH

Work sprung from Games Workshop to other miniature and role-playing games companies like Fantasy Forge, Target Games and France's Rackham. For all of them, Adrian has worked his detailed, jagged-teethed, fierce-faced characters into the fantasy world. He's also created concept game art for EA Games and Ubisoft, Vivendi Games, Activision and for mobile games such as Dungeon Hunter 5 for Gameloft.

In early 2011 Adrian teamed up with South Korean artist Hyung Min-woo, a superstar in his home country thanks to his hit comic and subsequent film Priest. They came up with the story of two worlds

ADRIAN SMITH VITAL STATISTICS

And the really important questions

Date of birth

1989

Place of birth

England

Current location

Scotland

Favourite artists

Too many. The first b'g influence for me was Paul Gustave Doré, but the 1st grows daily.

What's your favourite folklore?

Nordic and Celtic



Career highlight so far?

Working on the Diablo source book – the artist line up was a dream: Iain McCaig, Jean-Baptiste Monge, Brom, Alan Lee,

John Howe... yeah, it was pretty exciting!

The meaning of life?

I don't want to know. It'll only depress me.

publisher scuppered the venture before it could flourish. "It was back in the 1990s. I did five covers for these people and they didn't pay me for any of them," Adrian says. "I'm looking forward to catching up with that art director one day."

"Working on The Lost and the Damned was a chance to go crazy with my ideas"

Pat was to play his part in Adrian's next steps into comics, however. While Adrian was running an art exhibition with the Galerie Daniel Maghen in Paris, he struck up a conversation with the French publisher of Pat and artist Olivier Ledroit's Requiem Vampire Knight. "I got speaking to Jacque Collins of Nickel Editions, enthusing about Pat and the stories I grew up with – mainly

existing in parallel dimensions, ruled by the king Kran. "In the Western world Kran has 100 sons. After his death some want to find a way of getting to Kran's other world for plunder and war – all the things Westerners like," explains Adrian. Currently only in Korean, it's worth tracking down to see both artists exquisite art, playing off each other's grand

ARTIST TIP

FOCAL POINTS AND WHY LESS IS MORE WITH COLOUR

"Although I've only come to this recently, don't overcomplicate your images. Start with your focal point and work out from there. If the viewer's eye is having to travel all over the page without eventually resting on one thing then the image won't have a chance to make its mark. The same goes for colour. Keep them to a minimum. I find three colour groups are usually best. If I'm honest though, I think monotone work is more fun and more pleasing to the eye. But that's just a personal preference."



CROMAG

Why happiness isn't usually on the artistic agenda - though Raquel Welch is more likely to be

A personal piece, this is one of Adrian's favourites, "as I'm happy with the narrative I've managed to imply," he explains. "I don't tend to go for happy stories, because these never seem real enough to engage a viewer. This picture is no exception." It shows a father and son on the run, "maybe seeing their village in flames, maybe they're the last of their kind and they're hitting the road constantly trying to outpace something," says the artist. "I've always had a soft spot for this sort of fantasy. Neanderthals, mammoths, Stone Age, bearskin pants, Raquel Welch fighting off dinosaurs with a pointy stick..."

Although digital, Adrian paints on the computer in a very similar way as he would traditionally. Drawing the image up to a "reasonably detailed stage," he underpaints it. "I then paint over the top of this underpainting, as I would do with oils, acrylics or whatever."



COVER ART

"An early digital painting. Playing around with cool and hot lighting."



GOBLIN

Personal work; watercolours on watercolour paper. "I love working with watercolours. Great fun."



OGRE HEADS

A personal piece, painted in oils. "I started with a quick colour wash of watercolour before applying the oils."

"The window cleaner warned my mum about the dangers of Satanism"

➔ imagery; a concoction of Eastern dragons and Nordic barbarians.

The roots of Adrian's connection to the fantasy barbarian world will be familiar to many readers. "Conan and John Boorman's *Excalibur* were my reason for falling in love with that world. Other films and artists too, but they are the main instigators," he says. "It has a strong toehold in reality too, I suppose. I like fantasy with a little bit of realism in it. That way, the viewer grasps the concept straight away, often without realising it."

Although mainly working traditionally, Adrian's recently ventured into the world of digital comics, joining the ranks of Dave Gibbons and Bill Sienkiewicz to create *War in Heaven* for Liam Sharp's Madefire outfit. Loosely based on John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and written by *The Stone Dance* trilogy author Ricardo Pinto the digital tablet-only comic will be out early in 2013.

He's on a roll. With a self-published book featuring plenty of unseen pieces of art

currently selling through his Facebook account, he's got plans to release a series of books that focus on his lighter side next year. Adrian is also developing his own brand and IP, a tantalising prospect from an artist who, by all accounts, has yet to receive the kudos his portfolio deserves.

Adrian doesn't care about that though, and as conversation returns to his childhood room, before he took Games Workshop by storm, he recalls how you could tell by the walls that he was destined for a career in fantasy art. "I loved Ian Miller's work – I first saw his work in a Tolkien Bestiary art book," he says. "I was blown away by his work and technique, so I painted his depiction of the Mines of Moria on my bedroom walls." He painted the rest of the room black just to frame the image right. "I remember being told by my mum that the window cleaner had warned her about the dangers of Satanism after seeing my room through the window. I kid you not." ■

KELL'S LEGEND

Cover art for one of the covers for HarperCollins's *Kell's Legend* trilogy, written by Andy Remic.



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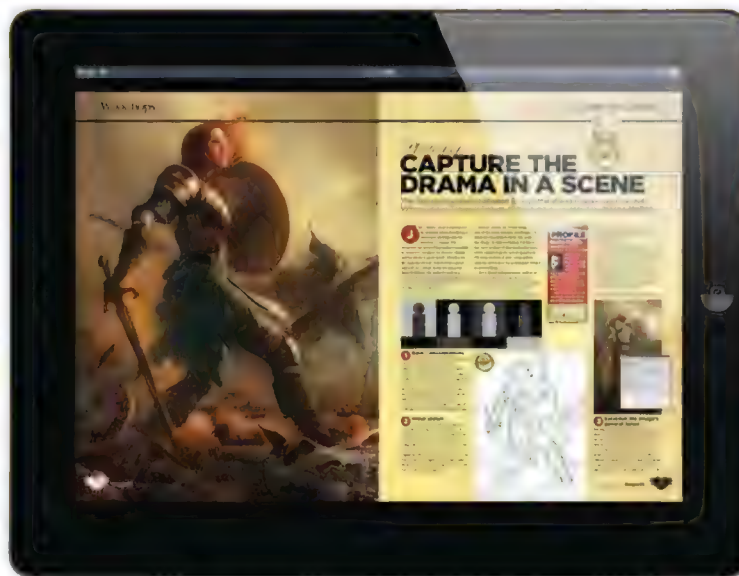
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Issue 86 September 2012



We celebrate the gaudy, over-the-top world of pulp art, and embrace the genre with workshops from Will Murai and Dan D Evans. Weta's Christian Pearce dirties up his art, ex-Disney artist Jack Bosson draws jazz dancers, and Thom Tenery paints a snowy alien landscape.

Issue 87 October 2012



The age-old problem areas of colour and light are tackled head-on this issue, with excellent workshops from Emmanuel Malin, Phroilan Gardner and cover artist Helen Rusovich on the subjects. We also talk to rule-breaking poster boy Simon Goinard and lots, lots more.

Issue 88 November 2012



It's a trip down memory lane this issue as we track down artists behind the Fighting Fantasy gamebooks. Workshops include Francesco Lorenzetti on three-hour speedpainting, Simon Webber on 3D creature concepts, James Gurney on fantasy architecture and more.

Issue 89 December 2012



Our game art special includes some of the world's leading video game artists. There's Remko Troost on Assassin's Creed 3, Hoyjin Ahn reveals Guild Wars 2 techniques and John Park discusses HAWKEN. Epic Games's Shane Pierce explores the art of Gears of War and we visit Ubisoft.

Issue 90 Christmas 2012



In our Blizzard issue, the video game publishers give us the green light to show off new art from Alex Ross, Simon Bisley, Syd Mead, Alex Horley, Paul Bonner, Craig Mullins and other great artists. Sam Didier paints a Warcraft-StarCraft mash-up, and Laurel D Austin composes spiky alien characters.

Issue 91 January 2013



In our Tolkien special we talk to artists John Howe and Alan Lee about making The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey, while workshops feature Gollum, Eowyn's battle with the Witch-king, and Corrado Vanelli's Middle-earth elf queen. Elsewhere, Donato Giancola shares his treasured techniques.

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Bastien Lecouffe Deharme

*In Retrocity, his graphic novel,
no one will hear you scream*



PROFILE

**Bastien Lecouffe
Deharme**

COUNTRY: US



Also known simply as B, Bastien is a French artist living in the US. Over the past 10 years, he's painted book cover art for the likes

of Philip K Dick, Chuck Palahniuk, Frank Herbert, HP Lovecraft, Theodore Sturgeon and Robin Hobb. He's also produced his own graphic novel, *Memories of Retrocity*.
www.roman-noir.com

EXPERIMENTS IN PHOTOSHOP

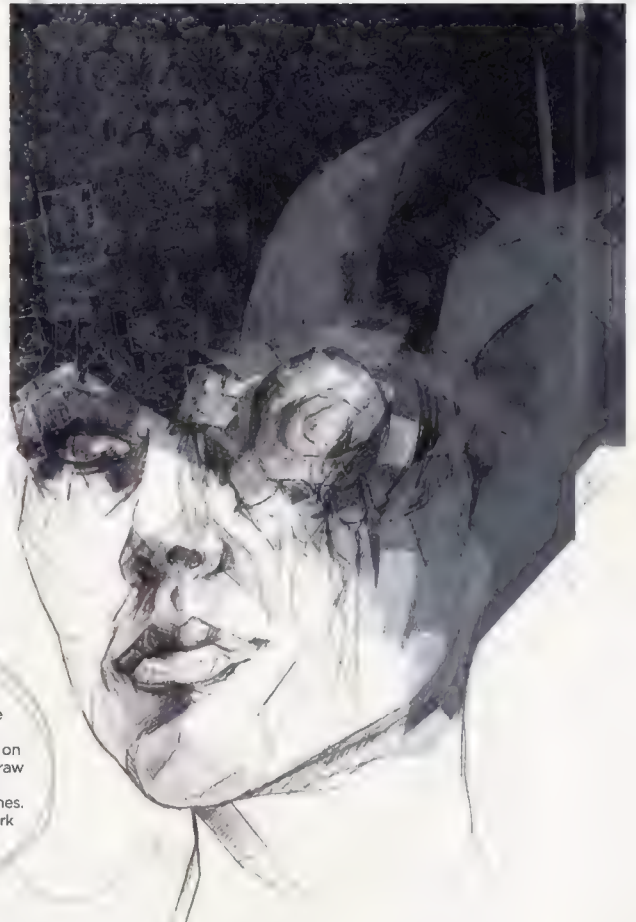
"I really enjoy sketching directly into Photoshop. The software makes me able to experiment very quickly with almost everything I want, such as colours, random textures, composition and brushes. When I finish a picture, I like to keep a balance between the traditional and digital mediums."





ANDROIDS

"Some quick 'if you were an android' portraits of friends. I like to mix concept sketches and life drawing. With these I tried to focus on the basics of the volumes. I like to draw fast, using the pen as a knife and scratching the paper with straight lines. This is something I miss when I work digitally. I can't afford to destroy a tablet each time I have to sketch something!"



"I like to draw fast, using the pen as a knife and scratching the paper with straight lines"

THE MARTYRS

"These sketches are from a series of 30 drawings I made when my graphic novel Memories of Retrocity was published. They represent the 30 first victims of the corporation Hover and its experiments on the human body. I drew all these sketches 'in the raw', and it was a very fun process for me. I started with a few ideas in mind, but at the end I was out of new concepts, so the work became almost instinctive."



Sketchbook



FAMILIAR FACE

"One of the only quick portraits I made of my spouse that I'm happy with! It's a strange frustration to never be satisfied with the drawings of a face you think you know so well."



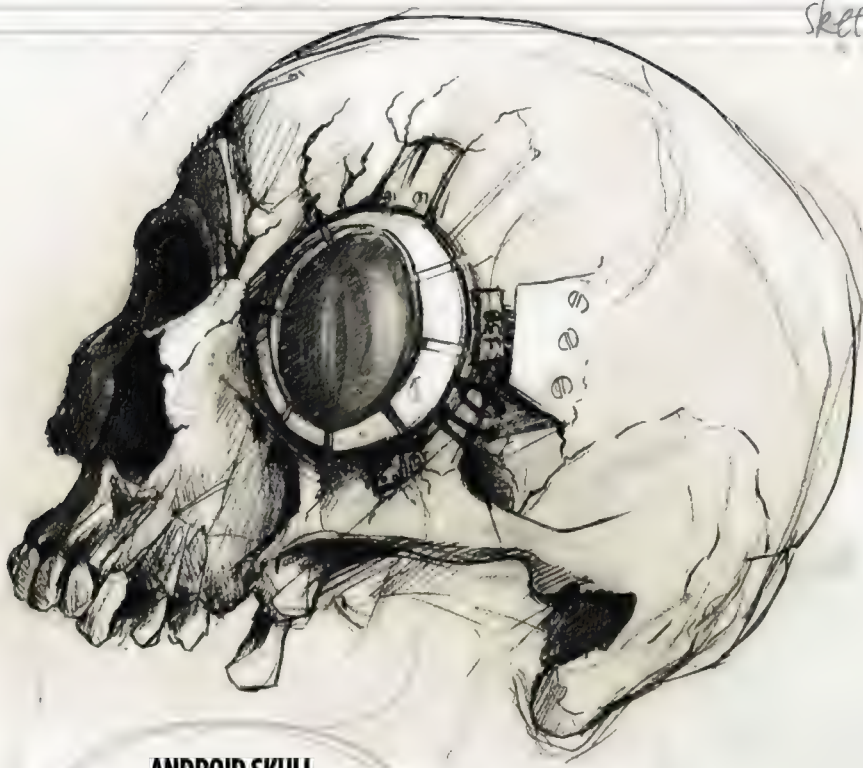
STOP SIGN

"I think one of the essential rules of the creative process is to know when to stop!"



FUSION

"In Retrocity, people who get sentimentally attached to an object will more likely start to fuse with it... and sometimes they can't stand it!"



ANDROID SKULL

"This sketch comes from a series of a few drawings that I never finished. Lack of time I guess. The idea was to paint still-life pictures with mechanical elements. Androids die as well, so I wanted to study their bones."

"It's a strange frustration to never be satisfied with the drawings of a face you think you know so well"

LIFE-DRAWING

"A good sample of an advanced sketch. The drawing on paper is a simple life-study. The concept and originality appears later, when I start to play with it in Photoshop. I do this very often: searching in my desk for an interesting sketch that I can use as a base for an illustration."



Want to share your sketches? Then drop us an email, with a selection of your artwork, to sketchbook@imaginefx.com, or upload your drawings at www.imaginefx.com/sketchbook.

“I want the viewer to bring their own sensibilities to the image and create their own personal story.”

THE SEARCH BEGINS

This steampunk image had the challenge of giving a robot personality – although Edward most enjoyed painting the central figure's blouse: “There's a looseness to it,” he says, “in both colour and brushwork.” [Close](#)

EDWARD HOWARD

This talented artist discusses his passion for oil paint and penchant for steampunk-style Victoriana

Edward Howard's work draws on his love of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, combining an eye for authentic period detail with a soft spot for giant robots, all laced with a distinctive steampunk flavour.

"There's something fascinating about the cultural and societal perspective of those periods," grins the LA-based artist. "The economic and social upheavals of the time created a burgeoning aesthetic movement that explored extremes in art and design."

Edward lists the Arts and Crafts Movement, Art Nouveau and early Art Deco as key influences that have helped shape his style. "The craftsmanship and attention to detail in everything from architecture to graphic design brought about by Aestheticism is absolutely inspiring to me," he enthuses.

"To me, there's magic in taking the craftsmanship, quality and attention to detail of this time, and fusing it with a pseudo-modern techno-aesthetic," he continues. "The possibilities are endless."

Many of Edward's stunning paintings are notable for their dramatic sense of scale, filled with sweeping landscapes and futuristic environs. "For larger subjects, simplicity is always better," believes the artist, who regularly dips into books by Arthur Wesley Dow and Henry Rankin Poore for reference when planning a composition.

Achieving balance and harmony is crucial for keeping viewers' attention, he insists. "If larger shapes get lost in the composition, the eye gets tired and wanders aimlessly," he says. "Composition is always a battle. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't. And even when it doesn't, you're always learning and adding to your knowledge for the next piece."

THE HUMAN TOUCH

Edward is keen to establish an emotional, human connection in his work. To achieve this, he reveals it can help to inject a sense of realism into even the most fantastical, futuristic environments.

"I try to approach the piece as though it's in a real world or time," he explains. "I don't want the viewer to question the world in which these moments are depicted, so they can be drawn into the moment. I want them to bring their own sensibilities to the image and create their own personal story."

Another crucial part of this process is to research the necessary visual cues to tie a piece to a given time period. "That's generally costuming, and the internet is an invaluable resource for that," says Edward. "There are sites dedicated solely to Edwardian tea dresses, or 19th century undergarments."

After that initial research, he'll often head out to a prop/costume shop in

PROFILE

Edward Howard

AGE: 43

COUNTRY: US

FAVOURITE ARTISTS:

Harvey Dunn, Howard

Pyle, Dean Cornwell,

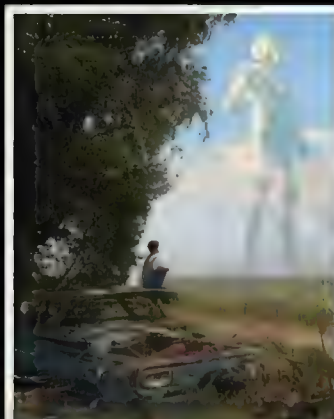
Haddon Sundblom, Craig Mullins

MEDIA USED: Oil paints

AVERAGE TIME PER IMAGE:

Two months

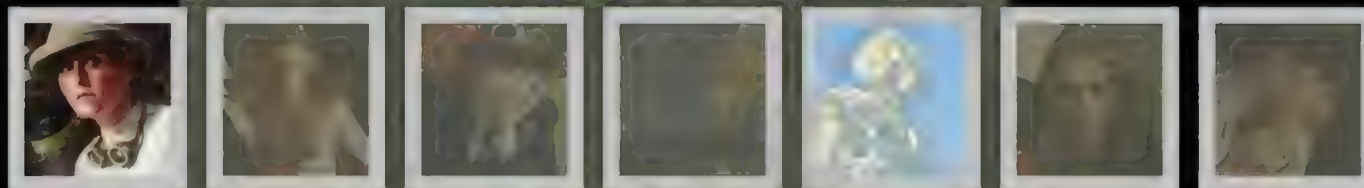
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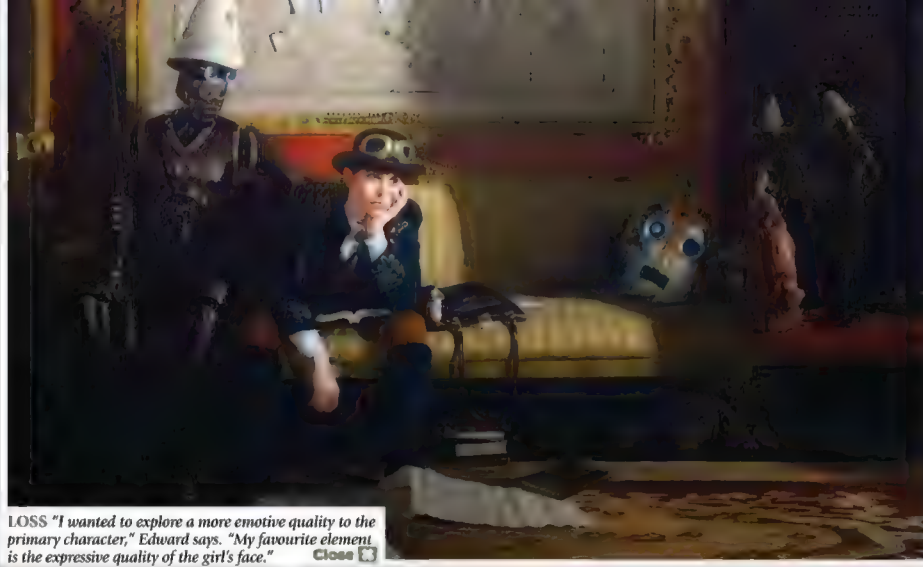
THE SENTINEL "I loved the idea of this immense piece of technology thrown into this bucolic setting. The sentinel wants to overwhelm the scene, so I used the tree's edge as a guide to keep the viewer's focus pulled toward the girl."

Close

Gallery



DRAGONESS "My goal was to reinterpret the dragon, depicting it as more of a companion versus an evil, menacing creature," says Edward. [Close](#)



LOSS "I wanted to explore a more emotive quality to the primary character," Edward says. "My favourite element is the expressive quality of the girl's face." [Close](#)

SECRET REVEALED

The past and future collide in one of Edward's eye-catching artworks...

While strolling around Pisa Cathedral, Edward noticed how the stones in its walls appeared to be randomly jumbled. "They were all different colours and sizes, with little rhyme or reason," he recalls. "I then noticed that some had partial inscriptions on them." It turned out they were fragments taken from earlier Roman monuments, and the concept of re-use inspired the backdrop of this piece: Secret Revealed.

"I wanted to explore the juxtaposition of something ancient, but technologically advanced," Edward goes on. "What does lost technology say about our current society? Is technology always good for civilisation? I wanted the viewer to think about the relationship between these two seemingly unrelated subjects."

His initial composition had the robot much closer to the kneeling figure, but he soon realised that they were crowding each other and adjusted the composition accordingly. Having chosen a limited colour palette of primarily red-orange hues using a gamut mask, Edward began by blocking in large areas of light and dark, before working in mid-tones and finally smaller shapes. "I then went back to do some final glazing, and subtle shifts in hue."

Although originally sketched digitally, the final piece was painted onto treated masonite, sealed with several layers of matte medium and smoothed with fine-grit sandpaper.

SECRET REVEALED

The figure is based on Edward's wife. He used compositional lines to pull focus on her face – such as the slope of the robot's mouth, the circular structure on the back wall, and the shadow of her right arm. [Close](#)



Comments



Ian Dean
ImagineFX

"Edward exhibits an amazing control of the medium and use of light to guide us around the image. The expression of frustration on the female warrior is matched by an almost ecstatic 'hiya' from the robot peeking through the wall. Great storytelling!"



Vlado Krizan
Reader

"Superb. I see a disappointed treasure huntress who, after weeks of perils, finally breaks the wall of some ancient vault, hoping to find something big – but nothing happens. So she sits down to rest, and doesn't notice that something big is peeking through the broken wall."



Greg Broadmore
Pro artist

"Incredible painting. Perfectly placed strokes of light create a solid sense of space, and effortlessly define the subject. This bored ninja lady could cure her 'meh' syndrome by looking behind her at the goddamned giant robot peeking through a crack in the wall! Mind blown."

EDWARD HOWARD

his native Los Angeles to gather physical reference materials. "I'm also an avid collector of antique photographic images," he goes on. "I can spend hours going through antique daguerreotypes or carte-de-visites for sale on eBay."

A flip through his growing library of art books completes the research process. For Edward, attention to fine detail is crucial not just in visual accuracy, but also the established laws of physics, light, shadow and colour: "It helps viewers accept the 'real' environment of the piece, and fall unquestioningly into the scene," he insists. "I never want a piece to feel too alien."

CLASSICAL ART TRAINING

Howard's time studying at the Florence Academy of Art proved formative for him as an artist. "I began to understand that the most important aspect of being a great artist is having a solid foundation in drawing," he says. "You must always understand the fundamentals before you can move forward."

He arrived in Italy with a burning desire to start painting, but eventually realised the importance of grasping the fundamentals first. "Without the basic skills of observation, I could never truly convey what I was seeing to paper, let alone canvas," he reflects.

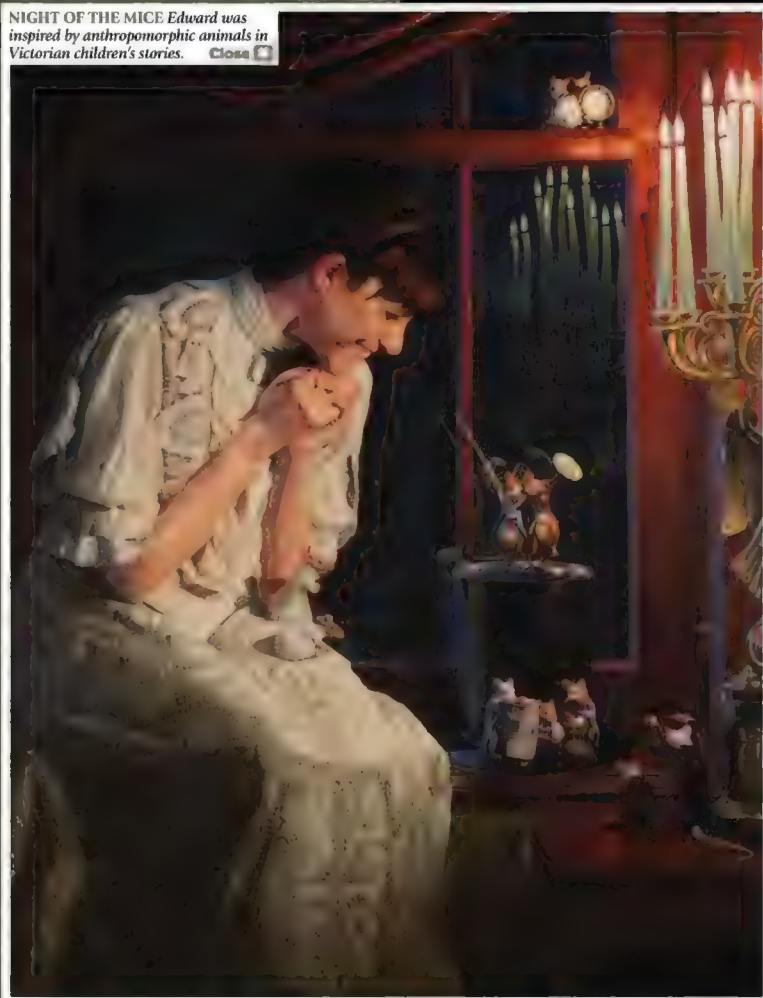
This classical atelier-based training informed the aesthetic quality of his work, and he's of the opinion that many modern artists and illustrators across various media are still exploring the same basic themes that their predecessors did centuries ago. "The early depictions of Greek and Roman mythology are no less fantastical than what artists create today," says Edward.

Oil paint, beloved medium of grand masters the world over, is very often Edward's weapon of choice – but it was digital painting, and Craig Mullins' work for mid-90s videogame *Marathon 2: Durandal* in particular, that drew him into concept art in the first place.

Of course, digital painting provides plenty of freedom and flexibility compared with oils. "I can be more bold, perhaps more experimental, when I know that a single keystroke can undo my mess," says Edward. "I have more opportunity to fail, and thus, learn through those mistakes without the permanence of consequence."

But he also draws attention to the lack of a tangible outcome as a regrettable

NIGHT OF THE MICE Edward was inspired by anthropomorphic animals in Victorian children's stories. [Close](#)

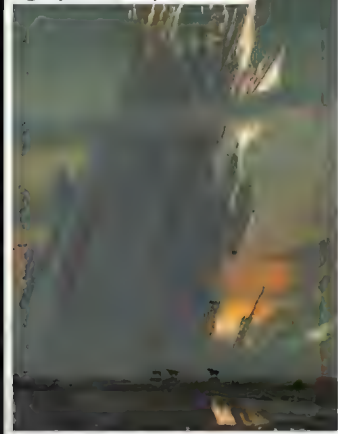


downside of digital work: the personal connection between artist and viewer is less immediate.

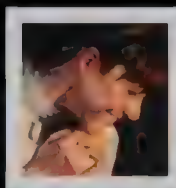
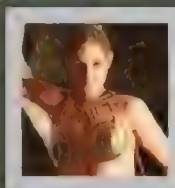
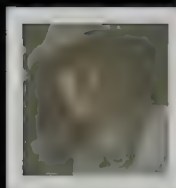
"I love getting my hands dirty; the smell of turpentine and linseed, and the feel of applying paint to canvas," he enthuses. "There's nothing more exciting than applying that one brush stroke that conveys your intentions perfectly."

While he often creates thumbnails and colour studies digitally, Edward is proud of the traditional background he cultivated in Florence, and enjoys the discipline that oil painting requires. "I need to be much more reserved and methodical," he concludes. "It's difficult to re-adjust an oil piece once I've committed, and so every one of my pieces has taught me an invaluable lesson."

THE RELIC "I drew the relic so that it enveloped the horses and kept the huge object in harmony." [Close](#)



Gallery



Development sheet

PROJECT TITLE: CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE

With a spare 10 hours on his hands, Romanian artist **Adrian Luchian** was inspired by classic motorbikes of yore to create a futuristic-retro two-wheeled ride, combining steampunk design with sci-fi...

Artist PROFILE

Andrian Luchian

Country: Romania



Andrian is a concept designer and 3D artist. He's worked on numerous video games, including Silent Hunter 5, Rabbids Go Home, HAWX 2, Adventures of Tintin: The Game, ZombieU and Modern Combat. He's currently employed at Gameloft as a concept artist.

www.andrian-luchian.blogspot.com

ImagineFX

Looking for inspiration

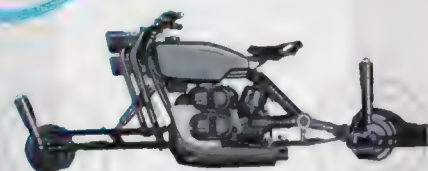
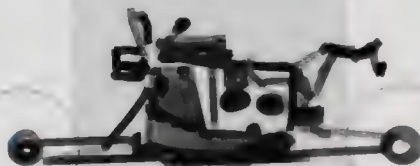
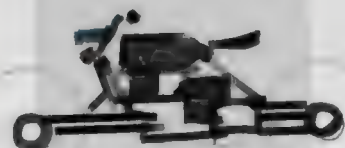
Some rough thumbnails help me get an idea about proportions and silhouettes. I keep in mind such motorcycle classics as Harley, Honda, BMW R100s and Honda CL350s as well as some more outlandish designs like the Confederate and Dodge Tomahawk.

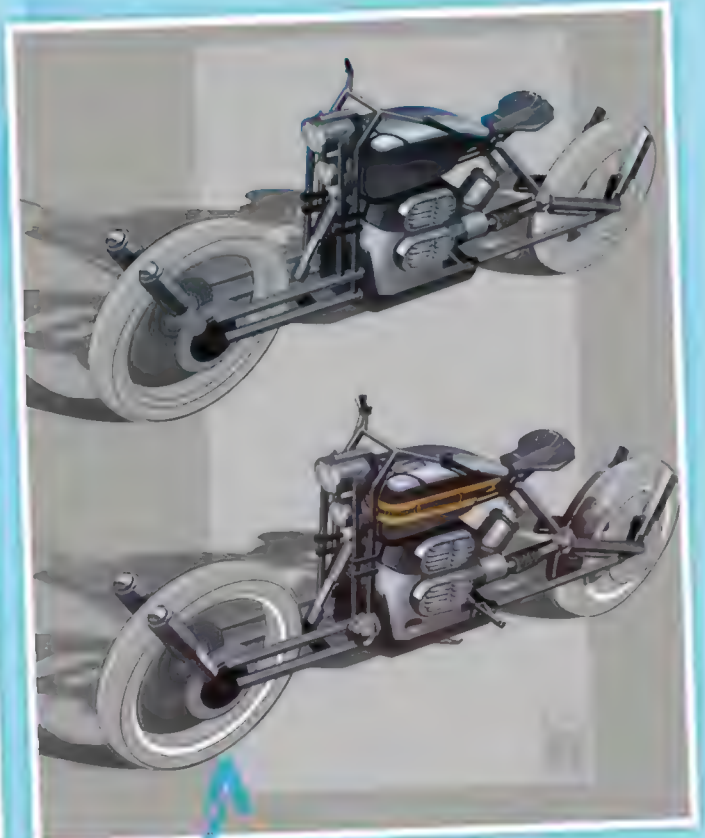
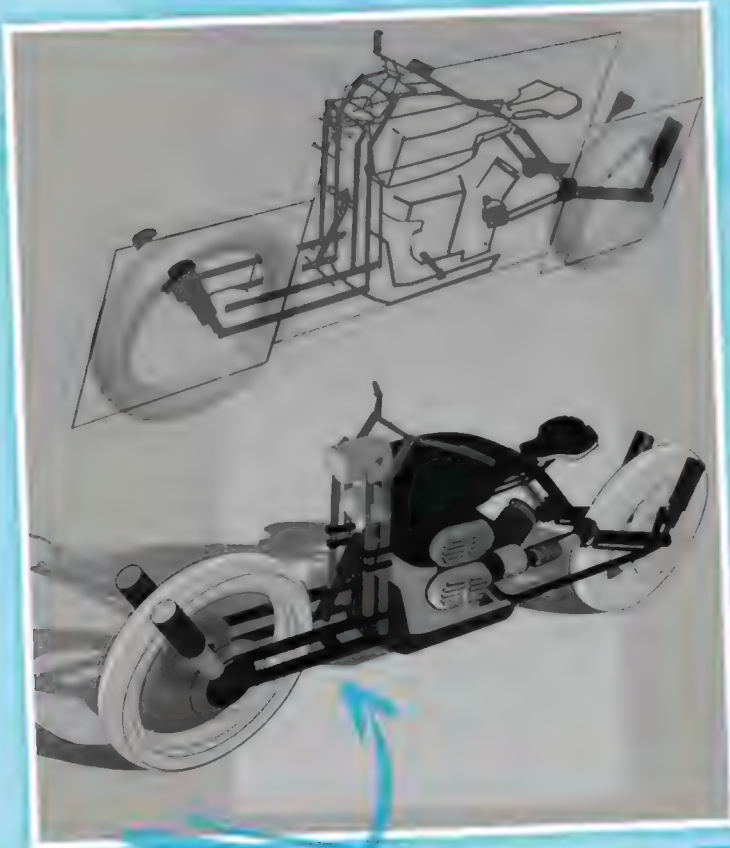
Preliminary selection

I choose three of my sketches and add some details to clarify the overall look of the bike. During this stage I use some photo references of engine parts to speed up the painting process. This also helps me stay true to my initial idea.

Continue with the best

I discard two of my sketches and break my chosen design down into three specific sections. Doing this will enable me to maintain proportions once I develop a 3D view of the motorbike.





Set up perspective plane

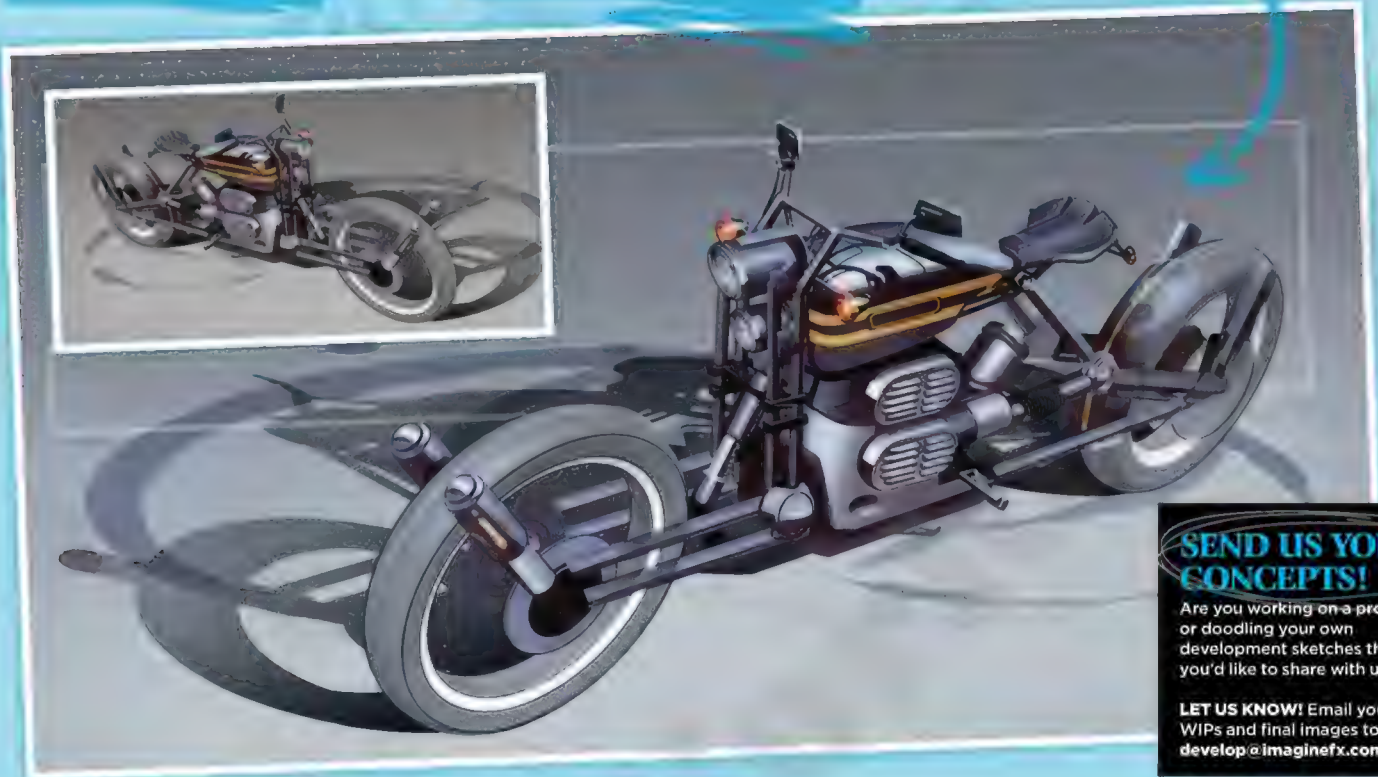
1. Draw a perspective plane.
2. Place the motorcycle on the plane.
3. Adjust the perspective of the plane.

Colors and details

1. Add colors to the motorcycle.
2. Add details to the motorcycle.
3. Adjust the perspective of the plane.

Final touches

1. Add final touches to the motorcycle.
2. Adjust the perspective of the plane.



SEND US YOUR CONCEPTS!

Are you working on a project, or doodling your own development sketches that you'd like to share with us?

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FXPosé *Traditional*

SHOWCasing THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

+ Jennie Gyllblad

LOCATION: England

WEB: www.jenniegylblad.com

EMAIL: jennie.gylblad@gmail.com

MEDIA: Watercolour, gouache, pencil and ink



For Swedish artist Jennie, telling a good story is as important as capturing beauty. "I've worked with various table-top RPG

publishers, but I mostly do portrait work, character designs, costume designs and graphic novels," she says.

Now based in Bath (like us!), Jennie has two ambitious projects on the go. "The first is *Skal*, my own fantasy graphic online novel. The second is *Clockwork Watch*, a three-part interactive story set in a non-colonial steampunk London. I've loved working with so many new people and projects this past year, and am looking forward to that continuing in the future!"

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"I saw Jennie's work at a recent sci-fi and fantasy show. I was drawn to her paintings by the way she combines collage and watercolour to create her Persian stories. Adding textures really makes the environment feel dry, hot and humid."

Daniel Vincent,
Art Editor

SKAL COVER

Watercolour, gouache, ink lines, collage, 11.7x7.9in

"This painting was made as the cover for the prologue of my graphic novel, *Skal*. I love experimenting with collage, but rarely get to do it for commissioned pieces, so I take the opportunity to play when I make artwork for myself."

THE LADY ASTRONOMER

Watercolour, gouache, ink lines, 12x10in

"I was commissioned by Katy O'Dowd to paint a cover for her book, where the story is set in a steampunk world. I had fun with this one because I enjoy creating trinkets and interesting characters."





Corey Wolfe

LOCATION: US

WEB: www.coreywolfe.com

EMAIL: coreywolf@msn.com

MEDIA: Oils, acrylics



Corey has been working as an illustrator since 1979. The self-taught artist paints classically in oils, or acrylics, as well as digitally, and says he's also comfortable with digital mixed media photography.

Corey counts Disney as one of his main clients, along with Wizards of the Coast, Universal Studios, 20th Century Fox, Columbia, Pepsi, Nestles, TIME magazine, NBC, Penguin Books, Random House, Amstel, Kraft, Carnegie Hall and others. He also builds steampunk film props.

The illustrator lives in Washington, US, "with my wife, daughter, one dog, two cats and seven chickens."

MERMAID

Oil on paper, 13x16in

"Created for Random House. I sometimes print a coloured sketch onto good-quality watercolour paper - I have a large format printer for this purpose - then mount it onto foam core, or masonite, and do an oil painting on top. This saves time on the underpainting."

THE LAST INNOCENT

Oil on canvas, 20x30in

"One of the few pieces I've done just for myself. I've long been fascinated by late-19th century artists such as Draper, Bouguereau, Leighton, Solomon, Waterhouse and suchlike."

TREASURE ISLAND

Oil on illustration board, 20x30in

"A Random House book cover. My model really got into the part - he was running on one leg and a crutch. Not as easy as you think."



SEND US YOUR ARTWORK!

Want to see your traditional art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi TIFF or JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them. fxpose@imaginefx.com

SEND YOUR ARTWORK TO:

FXPosé Traditional
ImagineFX
30 Monmouth St
Bath, BA1 2BW
UK



IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Corey's take on Long John Silver is masterful, from his colourful pirate trappings right down to his 'Arrr' expression, as he pulls along poor Jim Hawkins in the search for Flint's treasure."

Cliff Hope,
Operations Editor

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX Workshops

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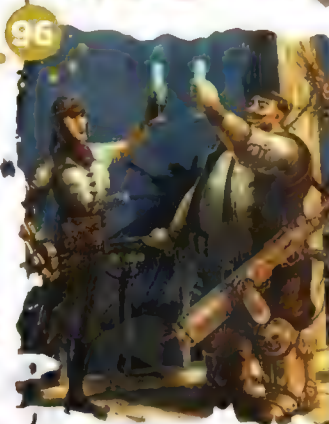
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Advice from the world's best artists



This issue:

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Render a mechanical dragon
using a simple approach,
courtesy of Steve Argyle.

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Backlighting can introduce
a real sense of drama to your
art, as Krenz Cushart shows.

74 Use backgrounds to lift your art

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Roy Santua shows how
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Paco Rico Torres explains the
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Mark Molnar paints a
complex environment.

Photoshop, ZBrush & Maya MIX 2D AND 3D IN YOUR FANTASY ART

Learn how to render a mechanical dragon and its rider using a simple, one-element-at-a-time approach, courtesy of **Steve Argyle**

I'm delighted to welcome you to my ImagineFX workshop, Mechano Dragon and a Girl! Hooray! (because "Live vicariously through me for 15 to 20 gloriously tedious hours of tiny brushstrokes, Mountain Dew and thoroughly abusing your worn-to-a-nub Undo key! Get in touch with your inner insomniac – I mean artist!" was way too long a title).

We'll skip most of the sketch and drawing phase, and concentrate on the painting bits. I'm assuming you can get as

far as a drawing on your own. I believe in you. (Cue inspirational music.) We'll talk about colour scheme considerations, and how to compose with light sources to keep your drawing balanced. We'll take a quick jaunt into 3D for a shortcut to drawing a million dragon scales. We'll make a brush for more time saving. I'll give you some of my brushes for even lazier time saving! We'll change our minds and start over on a thing or two. We'll consume a tremendous amount of caffeine.

The blessing and the curse of digital art is that you can change your mind at any

time. You can experiment without destroying anything. You can experiment, refine and add extra stuff to your heart's content. The advantages over traditional media are obvious. No drying time. No accidentally ruining a painting by smearing your palm across wet oil. No mistaking turpentine for green tea.

The disadvantage is that you can easily trap yourself in 'I think maybe I'll try this' purgatory, where you'll be stuck for hours or even days. Don't be afraid to use the medium and its strengths. But be aware of its pitfalls.



Artist PROFILE
Steve Argyle
COUNTRY: US

Steve is a full-time fantasy and science fiction illustrator, working with clients such as Wizards of the Coast, Tor books, and AEG. When he's not in the studio he frequents conventions and events, where he enjoys talking with the people who know his work, and introducing it to those who don't.
www.steveargyle.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/ix92-2013



1 Sketches, ideas and more sketches

Before I dive into the painting, I've got to hammer out the plan. That means mountains of sketches. I bombard my sketchbook or Wacom with all my ideas, then take a break, look at some things that inspire me, then look at some things that have nothing to do with my subject. Mechanical dragon? I'm going to get inspired by photos of mushrooms, vintage cameras, washing machines and jellyfish. I'm not kidding. I figure out how to incorporate elements from those things into my concept, and do more sketches. I then sift through my ideas for my favourite bits, and cobble and cram them into the next stage.

2 Bringing it together

Which is the drawing! I usually don't even do half this much detail in my initial drawings these days, truth be told. Because I'm painting over it, the drawing only needs to provide enough structure to begin painting. So I work out perspective, composition, element relationships and anything that won't be clear in my mind without line art to guide me. I'm not concerned about line quality, shading, stuff like that – just the bigger picture.

Shortcuts
Tool preset
Custom hotkey (Wacom controller)
I've got the Tool Preset pop-up mapped to my controller, so it's a single key press.

3 Base colours

Colour theory – the black magic of the art world. Mysterious and terrifying to the uninitiated... but it's really not so bad. And so very, very useful. Not pictured here is another, slightly smaller mountain of colour scheme comps. I think I know what I want with this one from the beginning. But I do some experiments and variations anyway, and almost always I find something better. Here, I'm going with an 'analogous with complement' scheme. Red, and its brother and sister yellow and purple, along with red's complement, green.



In depth Mix 2D with 3D



PRO SECRETS

Play with your art

I could sooner live without chocolate than without my Belkin Nostromo. It's a programmable game controller, with a bunch of buttons and a wheel. I use it for all my frequent brushes and hotkeys. Saves tons of time. My left hand now feels like an important player in my artwork.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: DIGITALIZER ROUGHISH

This is a quick and rough way to blend, without the result looking blurred or smudgy.

ONLY PAINT ALL LAYERS

Can be used to either add oil paint-like brush strokes, or to smooth out wobbly lines and edges.

HAIR WEAVING STRAND

This brush is mapped to twist over distance. So it 'weaves' around itself.

LINE - BRAIDED CYLINDER

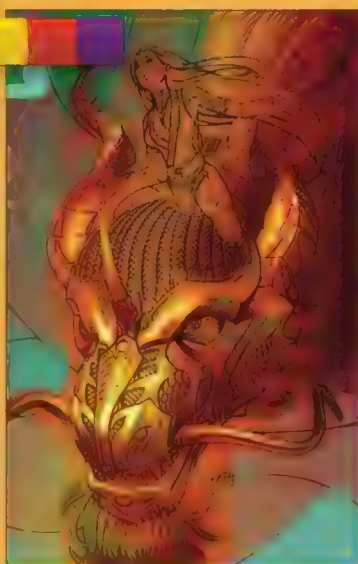
A brush made just for this workshop! It has a single section of braided cylinder, which is spaced and mapped to respond to direction.

CLOUDS

A simple brush that stamps a cottonball down. It's mapped to scatter and slightly varies the colour. Mostly just good for clouds.

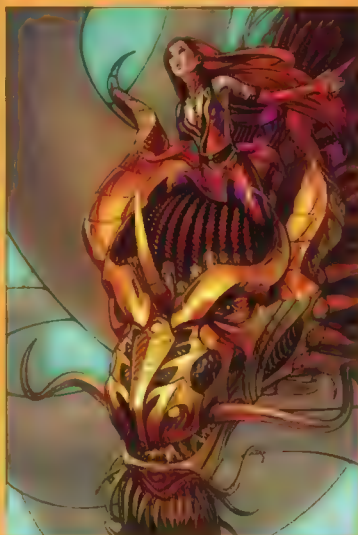
4 Calculate suitable lighting schemes

Now I consider the lighting of my piece. I approach light and shade one source at a time. There are a few things to keep in mind. Lighter values can pull in the viewer and carry more compositional weight than dark ones. So I want to light the piece for balance. If, for example, I had a strong light source on the right, the image would feel heavy on that side. I put the key light on the left and behind me. Next, I want a bounce light on that shadow side, which will give me a nice core shadow and a sense of volume and surface direction. I throw in the complementary colour here, and have a green fill light. To further the idea of surface direction, I add a third, faint source of violet light from the bottom. The last source of light is the environment. It'll add ambient light, and we'll also use it as an excuse to use a rim light to accent the edges of our subjects.



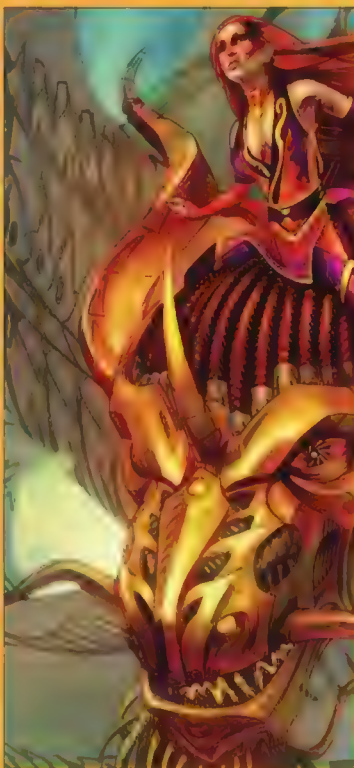
5 Finalising the plan

I work out the last of the colour choices, mostly picking from my established scheme. I've done all the hard stuff now. All the important decisions are made. I've used my colour and lighting schemes to plan everything out. Up until now, everything can, and should, be loose and fast. To me, everything up to this step is the artistic and creative part: making decisions, evaluations, changes, and getting all my ideas down and living happily together.



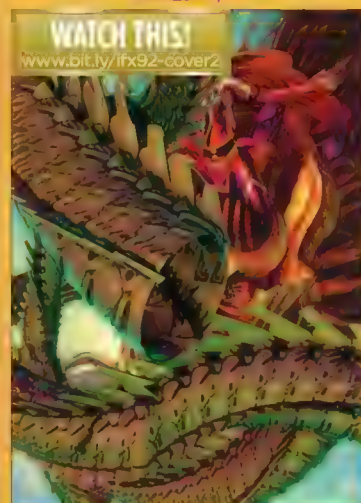
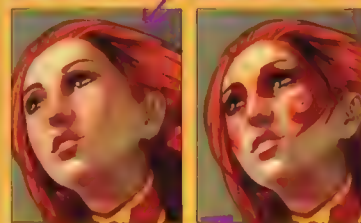
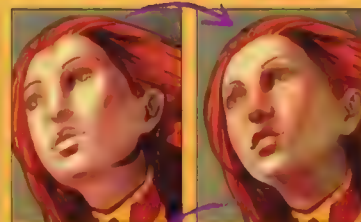
6 Begin long, tedious rendering

Now I start to refine the painting. From here on out, it's all about patience. I usually tackle the focal point first: the female rider. Which is in the category of 'things that will get you a rap over the knuckles'. But by this point I'm itching to zoom in and get finicky. My excuse is that it'll set the tone for the rest of the piece. I work from large volumes to small. I get the skin looking right before I do anything with the eyes or mouth. I'm constantly using the Color Picker to sample colours that are already in the piece.



7 My dragon is nude

Now I jump back to how things are more traditionally done. Back to front. My dragon's body is looking a little naked right now, so I sketch out a scale pattern for his body. I want to hit that balance between looking too organic to be a machine, and too mechanical to feel alive. This level of sketchiness is more typical of where I start the colour rough phase of a painting.



8 3D, if you can stand it

I hop over to ZBrush to make a quick body section, then briefly into Maya to deform it all into place and render it. This isn't as complicated as it looks. Maybe a half-hour, tops. For rendering, it doesn't even have lights or textures. It has an Ambient Occlusion pass, a Facing Ratio pass and a Normal Map pass, all composited together. If this sort of thing isn't your bag, it's easy enough to draw it out and paint it, like I will for the rest of the dragon.



9 Now ruin all that 3D

It's crucial to integrate the 3D elements. The biggest problem with 3D CGI is that it has a distinct and recognisable look. And more than likely, it's not the same, distinct look as your personal style. So paint over it. This is a surprisingly easy fix.

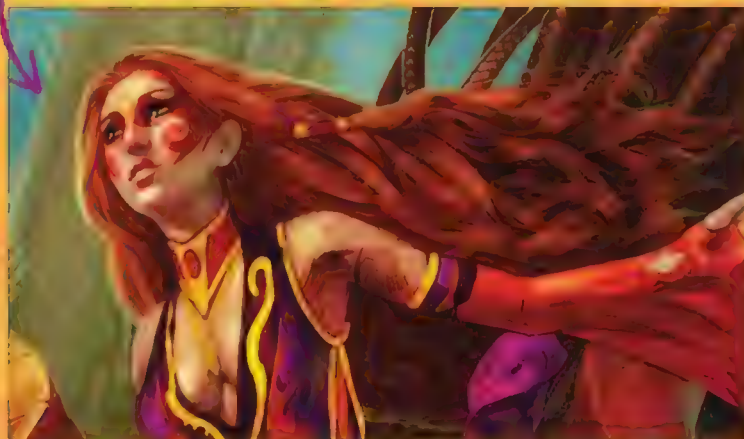
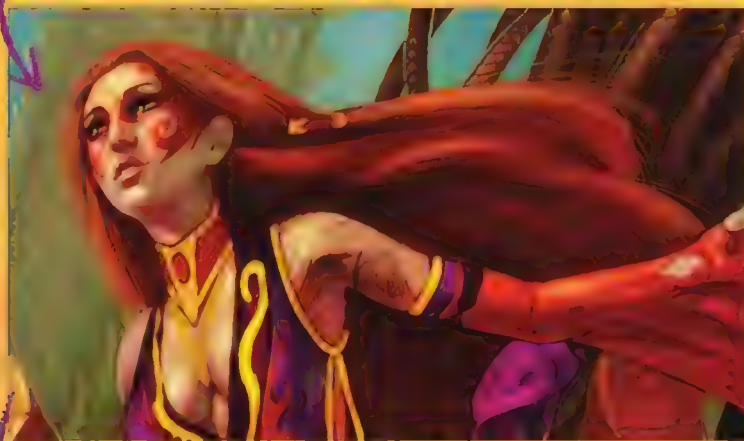
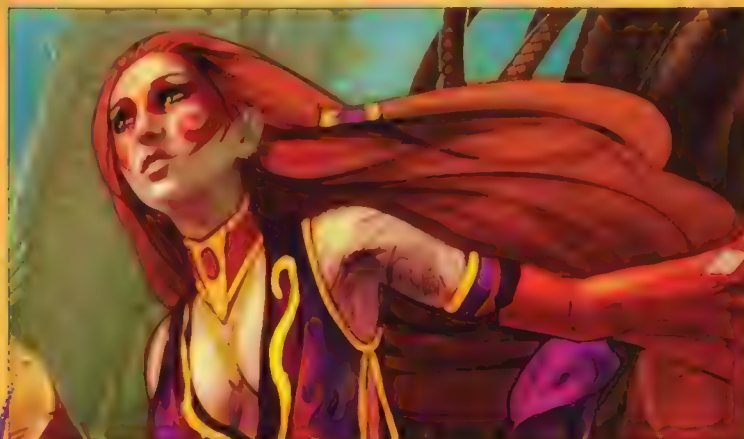
10 More tedium... I mean careful rendering!

Now I just need to go through and refine the painting. Cleaning up edges, smoothing out rough patches, roughing up smooth patches and getting rid of our line art. My Dedigitaliser Roughish Smudge tool will be a great friend for this. Other than that, I use two brushes for 99 per cent of the work. Both Round brushes, one Soft, and one Hard.



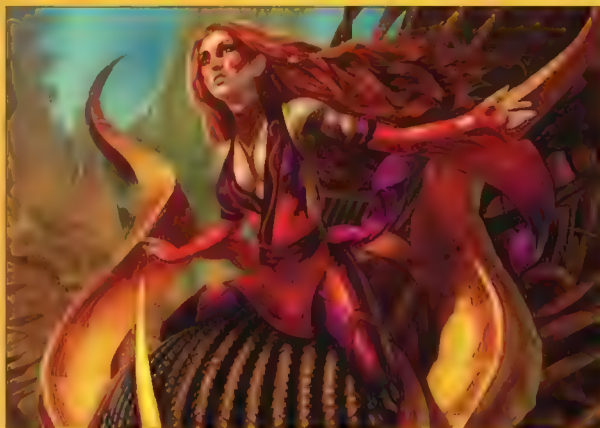
11 Back to the girl, finally!

I start back with the hair. And once I finish... I totally hate it and start over. It felt a little too smooth, and there's already a lot of smooth lines happening in this piece. Yes, I like the redo much better. Check out the Hair Weaving Strand brush – it's how I quickly make the hair go from big, ribbon-like shapes to locks of hair.



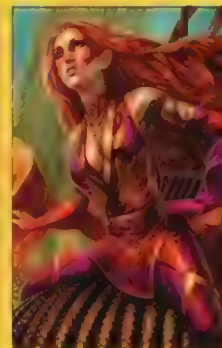
12 No retro-futuristic neon clothing

Now that I've gotten a little farther, the girl's outfit is a little too bright and vivid. So I re-rough out the outfit before moving on to details. I like to start with a dark tone, and add light to it. Like we did on her face, I'll start with the big shapes and add smaller details on top.



13 Almost there

Now I'm all finished as far as laying down strokes. Everything is in place, and has been brought up to a cohesive level of detail and polish. Now's a good break point to go get a snack and play some video games or sleep. I've been staring at this thing for way too long, and I'm totally numb to things that will be obvious later. If I don't have time, often I'll grab a friend who doesn't like me quite enough to be nice to take a look at it. After seeing it with fresh eyes, it's time to...



PRO SECRETS

Save time with gradients

Gradients and gradient maps are your friends. Get to know them. They can save you a great deal of time and headache in the early stages of your paintings. They can be incredible for special effects. For example, using a Gradient Map you can paint fire. Just paint where it goes, and there it is. All fire, with almost no actual effort.

14 ...finish the painting!

I throw on those last touches and final adjustments. In this case, I change the girl's proportions a bit, punch up the contrast around the focal point, and sharpen things here and there. It's really easy to start going crazy with extras. More surface details on the dragon. Like tiny rivets and seams all over the place. Maybe some corrosion of the copper here and there. Maybe she's got some braids, and a crown and more jewellery, and more tattoos, and a couple friends riding with her! Sometime, you've got to stop. For professionals, it's easy. You're done when the art director sends goons to your studio with pipe wrenches and a frightening ultimatum. For personal pieces, you've got a harder decision of when to call it finished. But only you can decide when that is. Thanks for sticking with me. Happy painting!

Photoshop

PAINT A BACKLIT MANGA CHARACTER

Backlighting can be tricky to master, but the effect can introduce a real sense of drama to your art, as **Krenz Cushart** ably demonstrates...

Artist PROFILE
Krenz Cushart
 COUNTRY: Taiwan



Krenz is a freelance professional illustrator who creates characters for games and produces book covers. He also teaches digital art.
www.bit.ly/1fx-kcushart

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/92-backlight

Many people find it tricky to depict a backlit character – and understandably so. In this workshop I'll show you the techniques I use to add a sense of realism to my comic characters, more specifically depicting my manga figures with accurate backlight effects.

Backlit characters are difficult to deal with, because they feature extreme light

and dark tones. If your tones are too deep when painting the shadows, you won't see the details of the expressions on a character's face, because it'll be buried in the shadows.

After many failed experiments, I finally developed a technique that produced great results. I use the effects of low-contrast shades in the shadows and then, with weak, subtle tone changes, I increase

the richness of the colour and tone. It works for me and my art.

I often use a backlighting effect in my paintings, because the backlit lighting effect always adds a dramatic feel to a character. Painting backlighting is a difficult challenge and care must be taken in order to achieve good results. Hopefully my technique will enable you to master this tricky effect!



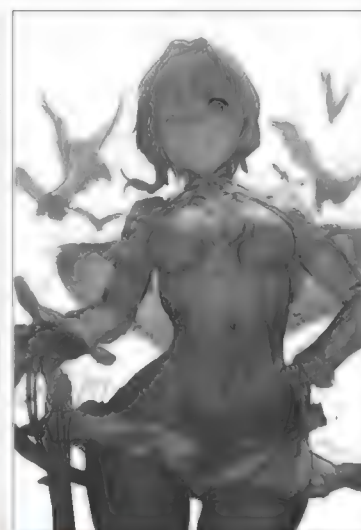
1 Quick sketch

I sketch quickly, improvising lines to create the contours of the character's figure and posture. To capture a sense of movement, I use an S-curve to connect the torso to the thighs. I then sketch out the facial expression and tailoring, but only roughly. I try to avoid too many details at this stage. It's more important to get an overall sense of the pose.



2 Add more details

Next I begin to add more detail to my initial sketch, such as clothing, decoration on the dress and the facial expression. It's important to keep the feeling of the initial sketch when adding more detail. Sometimes, placing too much emphasis on detailing can dilute or even destroy the original concept of the composition. With that in mind, I limit my detailing to several sections that I feel need to be clearly defined: colour, facial features and costume decoration. This means I can keep the original lines of the first sketch in place and retain what I initially liked about the structure of the image.



3 Lighting plan

I like to begin painting in a Grayscale layer because this helps me to judge the light and shadow areas of the figure. I place the brightest part at the focal point of the picture, which in this case is the character's face and upper body. I cast the light source from the upper right corner, leaning slightly toward the back. Now, the light will shine on her shoulder and upper chest, which reflects the light onto her face. I use this intricate technique to give a 3D effect to the character's face. For other parts, the sense of detail becomes weaker as the elements move further away from the main light source.





4 Colour scheme

Now I begin painting in colour. I change the original shadow layer mode to Multiply. To paint the background I open a new layer underneath my colour layer to block in the based colours. I decide that my character is wearing a red dress, and I choose to complement this with blue in the brighter areas. The character's eyes will be the colour of amber – my aim is that using these colours, the viewer will immediately cast their attention on to the face.



5 Facial highlights

Once I'm happy with the colour scheme, I start painting the character in detail, beginning with the face. First I use a single colour to roughly plan the lighting and the reflected light source – originally this was set in the upper right and reflecting from her chest. The result is that the entire face is softly lit. I add a highlight to the outside of the eye and to the nose, which is the other strong focal point on the face. I use a white light for these highlights. There are subtle highlights to add in other places: on the chin, lower lip, upper lip, and the centre point of the eye socket. Once I've worked out where the light and shadows are, I slightly enhance the contrast using a Luminosity Mask (Ctrl/Cmd+M) and make a subtle change of the tone: a bluish colour is added to the highlights and the cheeks are given a reddish hue, to make them feel rosy and delicate.



6 Working up the eyes

Now it's time to tackle the eyes. To accentuate their expression, I choose colours with a high saturation, in this case red and orange mixed with green as a complementary colour. To make the eyes look realistic I add a lot of detail into the immediate area around the eye itself, such as the eye socket, eyelids and bags under the eyes.



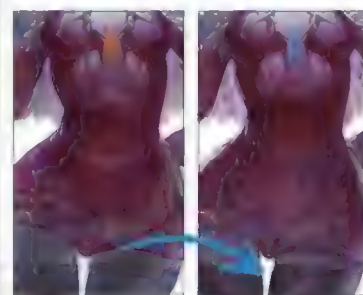
7 Painting the hair

To paint the hair I start big and go small. I use a wide brush to block in the light and dark surfaces, followed by a medium-sized brush to paint the feel of finely chopped hair. Finally, with a small brush size, I lightly paint in strokes of sharp light. Next I use a blue mixed with a little pink/purple to paint the hair behind the face to create soft tones that give the feeling of depth.



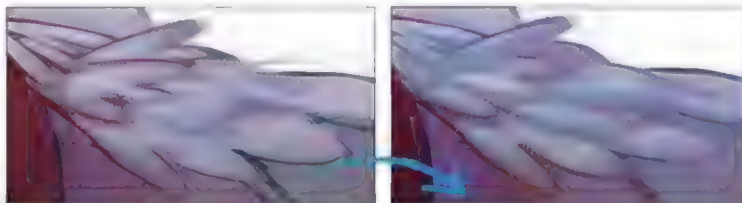
8 The chest and clothing

I pay special attention to a few key points, such as the significant difference in the reflective light from the various materials and the skin. The metal jewellery and fabric texture highlights are very bright and harsh, while the highlights of the skin tones need to be more varied, with a blend of blue and red. I want the fabric to seem frivolous and tight, so I depict a lot of muscle detail in the clothing with red highlights.



9 Garment details

As I paint the clothing, I follow the lines of my original sketch, gradually building the body using fine lines. However, I find the original version too rigid. I open a new layer and, over the finely painted abdomen, I add some irregular brush strokes painted from the bottom upwards to create more dynamic highlights and shadows. I also change the colour of the gemstone because I find the orange too eye-catching. Blue is a better fit because it matches the hair.

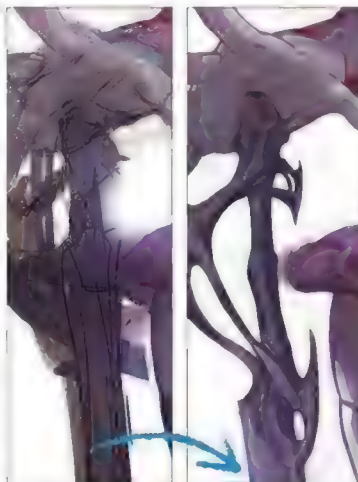


10 Add feathers to the costume

I paint the feathers with a small Powdered brush. To give the impression that these feathers are moving in a breeze I paint a hard edge around the outside, but don't draw clear edges internally. Instead, each feather is only slightly outlined using a Soft Round brush. To suggest the effect of soft light I use a blue-toned colour to paint the shadows on top, and to add some colour variation.

11 Supply the weapon

I want the weapon to reflect the curves of the character. Because this element isn't the focal point of the image I don't paint too much detail at this stage. At first glance it looks a little shabby, but in the next step I'll tackle the entire painting and begin to flesh out the scene with particle effects and details. This will look much better in context.



12 Generate some atmosphere

I download a free brush software called Blur's Good Brush from the internet (www.bit.ly/goodbrush). I use its Smokey Brush to create smog effect. I let the outlines and brush marks of the background mix together through the smokey effect. The weapon that previously lacked detail now comes to life, and it helps unify the feel of the overall painting.



13 Suspended particles

In addition to the smoke effects, I use an Air Brush to randomly increase noise and texture over the painting. It gives the effect of suspended particles in the air and I feel it helps to increase the sense of realism. Finally, I consider the sense of direction of the particles as I paint my strokes, to increase the dynamism of the scene.



PRO SECRETS

Using texture brushes

Texture brushes help me produce different effects in my art. A good texture brush can generate interesting details. Sometimes I just use a few texture brushes to create a piece of work. In a good piece of work, I always experiment with a few new brushes, and I use the good ones. I collected a lot of brushes from different sources. I use them, too!

14 Strengthen the luminous effect

I create an Overlay layer and paint a white backlight using a large Soft Round brush. This introduces the effect of light coming from behind my character. I ensure that the bats are behind the light source because they're not the focus of the painting. I paint them in silhouette with a gradient, ensuring that the darkest side is against the brightest area of my light source in the centre of the scene. The danger is they could look too monotonous, but coupled with the backlight effect and suspended particles, I think it works well.



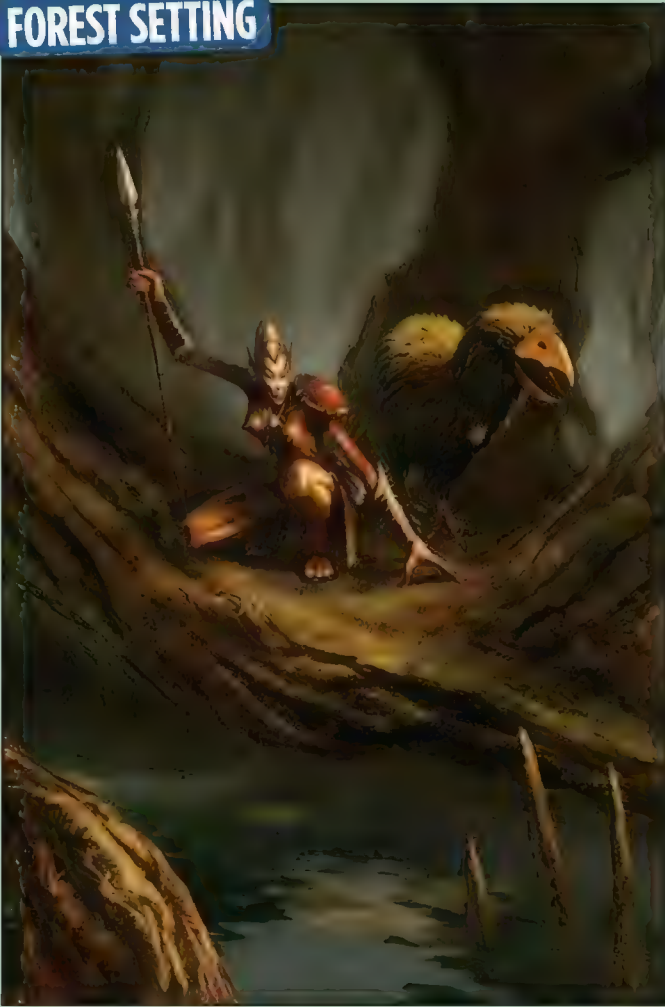
15 Introducing motion blur

I select the Smudge Tool and rub it back and forth across the painting to create the effect of motion blur. In general, it's best to emphasise the blurring effect in areas of the composition that are farther away from the focal point. And now the character is complete. I hope you like her!

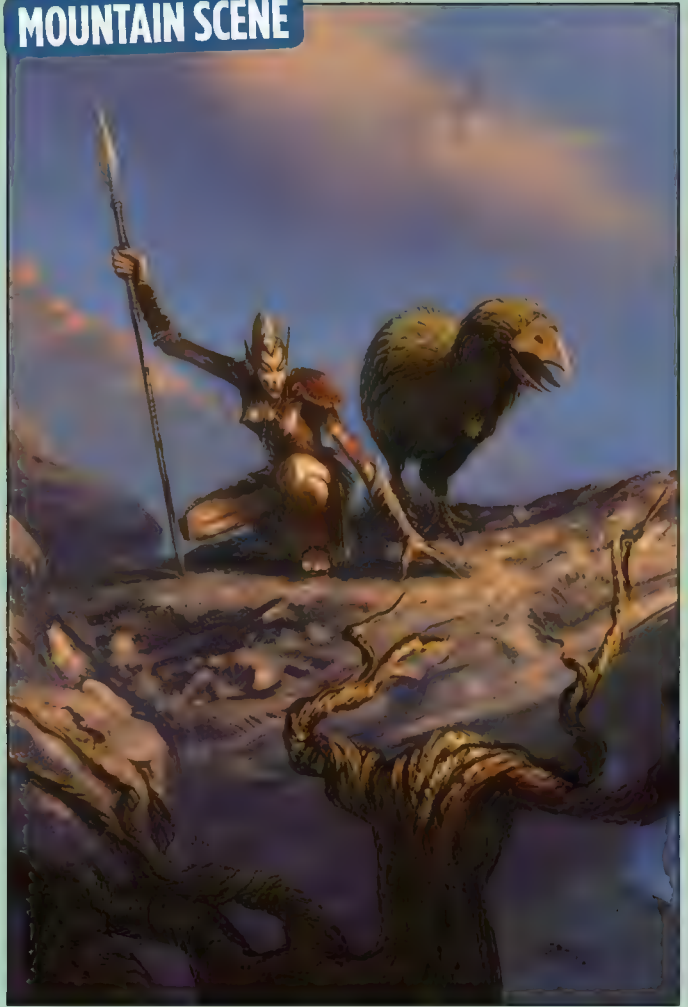
GRASSY PLAINS



FOREST SETTING



MOUNTAIN SCENE



Painter

USE BACKGROUNDS TO LIFT YOUR ART

Artist PROFILE
Łukasz Matuszek
 COUNTRY: Poland

Łukasz is a freelance illustrator who creates art for games and books. He's a fan of sci-fi and fantasy art.
www.orthexa.net

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/92-backgrounds

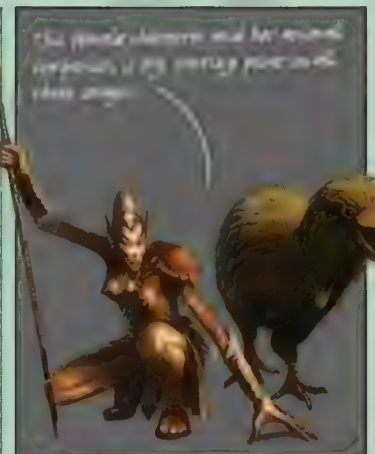
Łukasz Matuszek reveals how the right background can enhance the mood of an illustration, and any character in it

Your choice of background in a character illustration is very important, but you have to remember that the background is to enhance the character, and not vice versa. Even the most epic, awe-inspiring background will ruin the illustration if it doesn't fit the character.

Here I'll show you how the elements behind the character affect the mood of the image and bring the foreground

contents to life. The character has to catch the viewer's eye, but the background gives you the chance to tell more of the story. Composition, colours, textures... all these elements must work together and support what you want to achieve.

I'll produce three backgrounds for one character. Each will differ from another in textures, colours and mood. Apart from a slight change in colour, the character is identical in all three illustrations. ➔

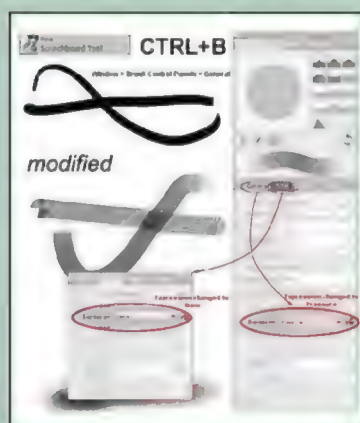


GRASSY PLAINS

I've already created the character who will feature in all three images. Her pose suggests that she's a pathfinder, who tracks down food for her tribe, or warriors from enemy encampments

1 Scene sketch

This character has strong visual rhythms created by the spear, and her long hands and legs. Her pet also adds a diagonal rhythm, going from its neck to the character's right leg. The background can strengthen this effect. I place her between stone monoliths: the long shapes fit well with the character. I chose a blue with low saturation for the background.



2 Custom Pen tool

I draw the main elements of the scene using a broad brush, using a modified Scratchboard tool from the Pen group (Window>Brush Control Panels>General). I change the Opacity Expression from None to Pressure, then click Size Tab and change Size Expression to None. I then save this new variant by clicking Brushes>Save Variant.

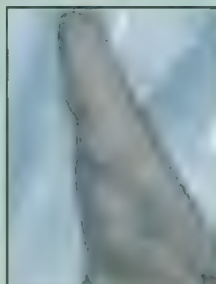
3 Block in the scene

The colours I'm using now may change later. I'm not focusing on details; I find that using big shapes to block in the scene makes the composition stage easier. So I'd advise delaying the detailing process. Later I'll show you exactly why.



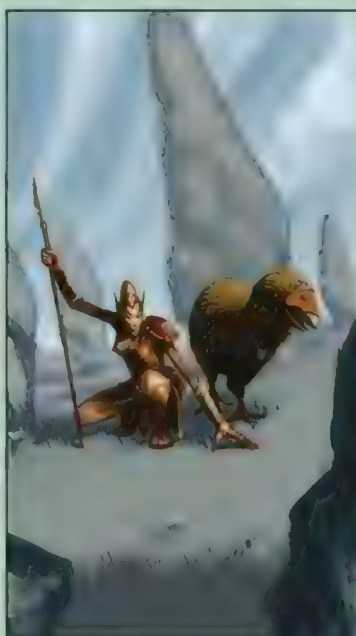
4 More details

The scene is now set. You can see the large stones and the field of grass going off into the distance. Now is the time to add some details. I create a new layer and use small brushes to enhance the surface of the stones, and to suggest where the grass should be. Once I'm happy with the result I flatten the layer to the background.



5 Spotting errors

Zooming out of the image will enable you to quickly identify flaws, as will flipping the canvas horizontally. I notice that some areas of the background are too close to each other, so I create a new layer filled with a light colour that's similar to that of the sky, then reduce the opacity or change Composite Method to Screen. If the effect is pleasing, I erase unnecessary areas. The layer should cover only the parts of the image that are off in the distance.



7 Adjust the saturation

The second option is Adjust Colors (Effects>Tonal Control>Adjust Colors). Here I can change the Hue Shift, Saturation and Value. In this instance I increase the Saturation slightly. Both options should be used carefully because for the most part you'll need to make minor changes to your image. But feel free to experiment using different settings. In time you'll be using these two tools more effectively.



6 Colour tweaks

The character and the background look like they're from different images. I have to match them. In Painter there are two useful options for this job. The first is Correct Colors (Effects>Tonal Control>Correct Colors). This enables me to tinker with the contrast and brightness of all three colour components – Red, Green and Blue – separately. In this case I increase the red and green components.

PRO SECRETS

Push back elements

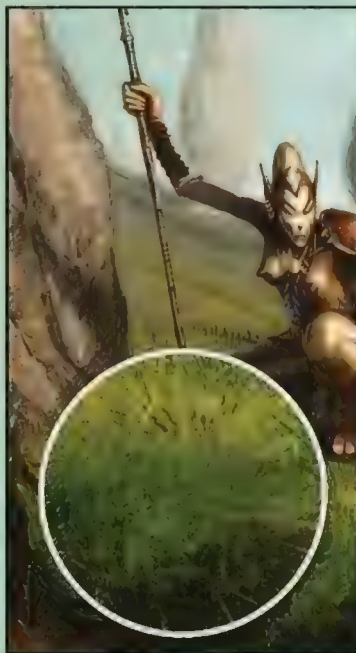
If some aspects of the background appear too close, create a new layer filled with a light colour that's similar to the sky. Then change the opacity to Low Level or set Composite Method to Screen. If the effect is acceptable, refine it by erasing areas of this layer that are affecting any foreground elements

8 Apply textures

Now that the character and the background have similar tones and colours, I can think about textures. I use three sources of textures in this stage: one is a Paper texture from Painter's library, the second is a photo reference, and the third is created by my own hand and imagination. I open the Papers panel; for the monoliths I use a Paper called Mountain. I create a new layer and scale up the background in the Papers panel. Now I use a new brush: the Square Chalk from the Chalk & Crayons group. I set the Brush Grain on a low level – usually it's 11 per cent. Now every stroke will place a texture on the layer.

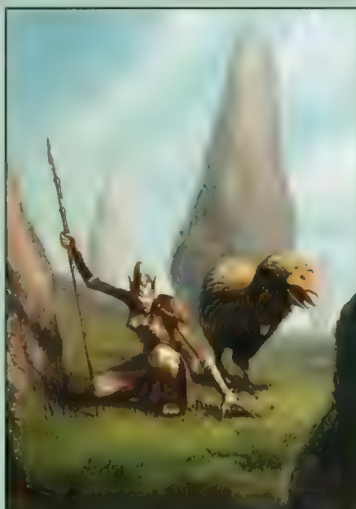


Highlights require a colour that's brighter than the background; I use a darker colour for shadows. Now I erase some parts of the layer, and try different Composite Methods and layer opacities. Then I flatten the layer. I zoom out and discover that I don't like this scene. I have to change the framing, which results in greater emphasis on the character.



Now it's time to do something with the grass. Drawing every blade in perspective is a terrible idea. I can mimic the look of grass using some of Painter's brushes – perhaps Camel Hair from Oils. You can try this, but I want to retain the texture. I load the image of the grass, cut out a fragment and place it on a new layer. I change the opacity, and set the Composition Method to Overlay. Then I use the Eraser tool to blend the edges, before flattening that layer.

I look at the image and see that the biggest stone isn't quite right. This is a shame, because the picture is almost finished. It's one compelling argument for finalising the image during the sketch stage, but sometimes these things happen. A few more brush strokes, some colour tweaks and the image is finished.



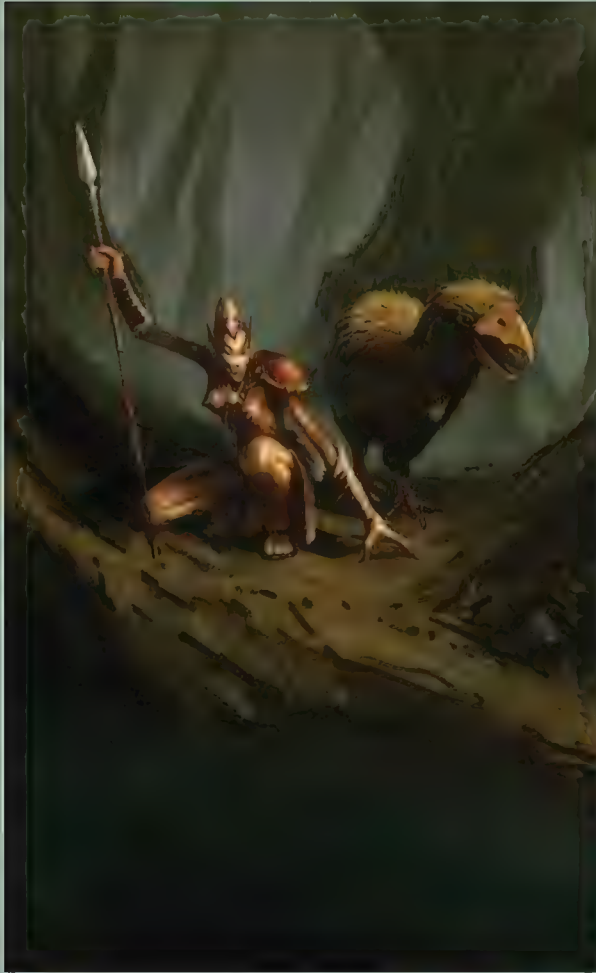
WATCH THIS!
Watch a 10-minute video

1 Scene sketch
I want to place my character between tree trunks that form a V-shape. In my previous background the stones played a similar role. I introduce more variety to this image by placing some water near the trees. Behind the character there are even more trees, but one is bigger and closer. You can see that this setting leads your eye to the pathfinder. I paint a body of water but it's too big, so I drop in a branch or fragment of the trunk pointing to the upper right corner. This creates a diagonal with the big tree in the background.

I want to place my character between tree trunks that form a V-shape. In my previous background the stones played a similar role. I introduce more variety to this image by placing some water near the trees. Behind the character there are even more trees, but one is bigger and closer. You can see that this setting leads your eye to the pathfinder. I paint a body of water but it's too big, so I drop in a branch or fragment of the trunk pointing to the upper right corner. This creates a diagonal with the big tree in the background.

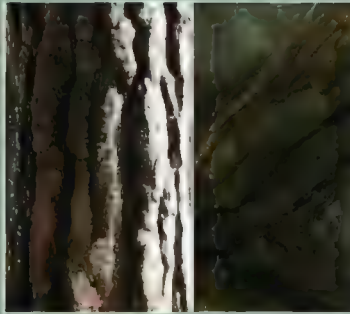
[illegible]

3 Colour choices



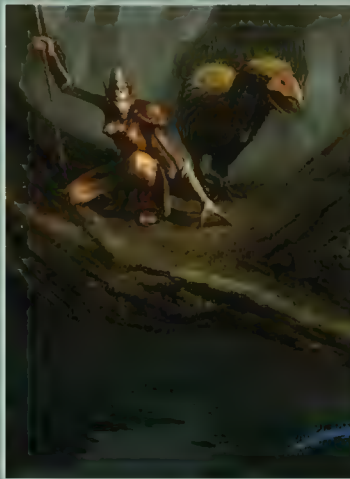
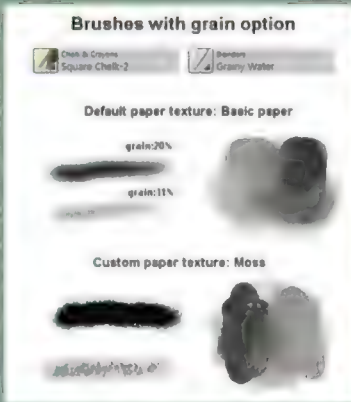
4 Textures and details

5 Create a new Paper



6 Apply texture

7 Fine-tuning



8 Improve the water

 Finish the scene

Shortcuts Change

brush quickly
Ctrl+Alt (PC) Cmd+Alt (Mac)
Hold this and the crosshair
will appear. Drag your
pen tip and the brush
size changes.

PRO SECRETS

Be proactive
Find some good reference sources or take photographs of interesting surfaces. Set up your own Paper library. Doing this will help you with your painting process, save your time and give your art a unique look.

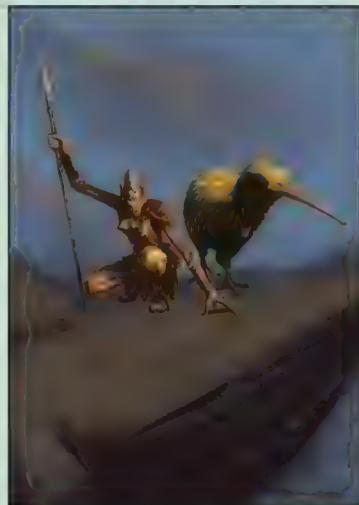
MOUNTAIN SCENE

This time our pathfinder is a member of a mountain tribe. I want this scene to be open and filled with warm light, placed somewhere in the high mountains. I want also to achieve a more painterly effect



1 Scene sketch

I start by setting the background colour as a blue with some violet tones. The rocks will be brown. This time I use a different brush: the Square Chalk brush combined with Basic Paper texture gives me a nice rough stroke. This scene will have fewer elements than the previous two. I give the bird-like companion a new look by extending its beak.



2 Visual rhythms

I'm using fast strokes to draw in the main elements: a big, triangular rock pointing right, the diagonal cloud above the character, and some distant mountains behind the pathfinder. These elements create diagonal rhythms that focuses the viewer's attention on the pathfinder.



3 More details

Sticking with the Square Chalk I draw in more details. The rocks now have more defined shapes. I introduce well-lit areas and suggest the presence of some stones using a light brown colour. The cloud is now larger and catches more light. I use the Just Add Water brush from Blenders to smear it and give it a smoother appearance.

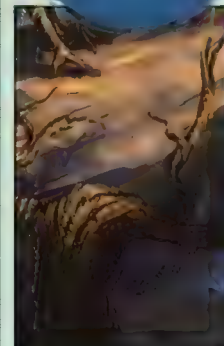


4 Improve the composition

I zoom out and realise that something's not right with the scene. So I decide to draw a twisted trunk in the foreground. A well-placed element that's close to the viewer often creates more depth.

5 Colour check

There is not much to do, because the colours are consistent. My character fits well into the scene and so no correction is needed at this time.



6 Textures and details

I scale up the canvas slightly, and then using a large brush on a new layer I add stroke with a little pressure. I want just a hint of the texture to come through. Setting the Grain option of brush on a low level helps me to do this. I erase some unnecessary elements, then check to see if other composite methods are better than the default option. If so, then I leave it and flatten. Now I add more details, and enhance the light or shadow to better show off the stones and patches of grass.

7 Finishing up

I change my mind about the bird's beak and give it its old look. Then I tinker with Painter's Correct Colors and Adjust Colors tools. I enhance the overall contrast and tweak the brightness of the blue channel. And the scene is complete.



Photoshop

USE ONE BRUSH TO COMPOSE A SCENE

Roy Santua reveals how Photoshop's Hard Elliptical Round brush enables him to paint 95 per cent of this futuristic action scene

Artist PROFILE

Roy Santua
COUNTRY: US



DIRECT LINK FOR
WORKSHOP FILES

I have a habit of trying and testing new brush tools – some that I've created, some from friends, and some that I've found online which have been made by some of the best artists in this amazing industry. I've found that using the Hard Elliptical Round brush is the most efficient way of achieving what I want to see in my painting style. It's by far my favourite brush tool, and one that I'm most at ease with.

When painting I'd recommend making yourself as comfortable as possible. I

don't just mean how you're seated, but also the configuration of your canvas, having your favourite brush set to hand, and so on. A relaxed setup will help you create good art.

I'm still learning as I go. Indeed, I'll always be learning new things throughout my career and I hope that you take something useful from this workshop, too. I love to paint and draw digitally as much as I love traditional painting and drawing. It's this combination of platforms that has led me to conclude that I'm basically drawing with colours.

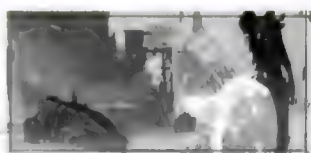
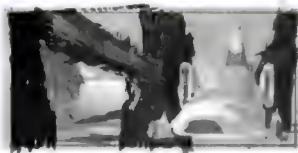


1 Do some research

Careful planning works wonders, but even a casual glance at what's happening in films, websites, video games and publications will highlight trends in certain genres. To get an idea of what to paint, I'll go to websites, books (especially 'art of' books), films, magazines and, most importantly, see what other artists have recently been doing – the colour they use, their favourite subject and style or maybe even who they work for. This approach enables me to be aware of what's going on, learn, and create a style of my own. However, never copy or use a part of someone's work in your painting. This will degrade your status as an artist, besides possible legal implications.

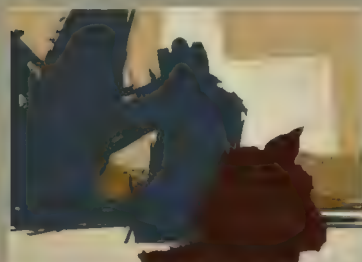
In depth Use one brush





2 Composition and colour

For this painting, I start sketching thumbnails using the Hard Elliptical brush. I saw the potential in the fourth thumbnail, which I highlight with red. I use greyscale for my tonal values and once I pick the image I then go ahead and fill in my colour comps. Be aware that all major shapes in this painting are layered from background to foreground. A unique blend of colours always seems to work well for me.



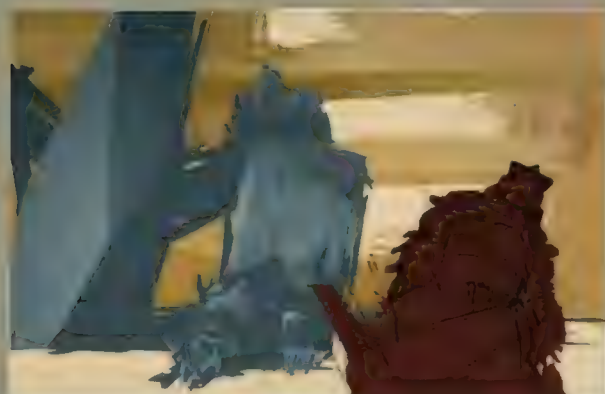
PRO SECRETS

Employ the Gradient tool

The Gradient tool is a powerful tool for creating smooth color transitions. It's especially useful for creating atmospheric effects like a glowing window or a sunset. To use it, select the Gradient tool from the toolbar and click and drag across the area you want to fill with a gradient. You can also use the Gradient tool to create a gradient fill for a layer or a selection.

3 Meeting the client's requirements

I always take this into account seriously. Not only does it establish a good client relationship, but it also maintains a good business status and reliability. For this workshop imagineFX asked for a particular image size to suit its magazine format. After choosing the colours I want, I resize the image [Alt+Cmd+I] and tweak the composition.



4 Maintain colour harmony

You're looking at a weird amount of colour contrast on this colour comp, but by gradually shifting them, with the right amount of values, I'm harmonising the colours I assigned to each shape. At this stage, I use the Gradient tool. Gradient>Overlay is the command I mostly rely on when I want to saturate, desaturate and highlight sections (see top right and left side of the background building). I pick the colour of the spaceship to shade the building.

PRO SECRETS

The benefits of zooming

Zooming in and out of your painting is a crucial skill for maintaining detail and overall composition. It allows you to see the big picture and make adjustments to the overall look, as well as zooming in to refine specific details. Use the Zoom tool to navigate through your painting and ensure every element is where you want it.

5 Sticking to my colour palette

I really want to stay within the colour palette that I've already established, so from time to time I pick a colour from within the painting and activate the Color Picker Window to adjust my tonal value, while still using the Hard Elliptical brush during the painting process.



6 Duplicating layers

It's time to accessorise my back- mid- and foreground. Like purchasing a new car, we tend to add accessories to make it more appealing. The goal is to make the scene look believable. One example is this glowing window, where I use the Lasso tool to select a portion of the building and duplicate the layer in the Layer window. I select Color Dodge mode to achieve the glowing effect, and use the Eraser tool to form the shape. I regularly use this technique for my lighting, highlights and most of the smaller details.



7 Keep detailing to a minimum

To avoid that busy look, keep details to a minimum – especially in the background. In the real world you won't see a doorknob from a mile away. For the buildings, I use a Textured brush for exterior walls and patches of dark and the Hard Elliptical brush for light tones. These are material indications and not detailed shapes on most of the objects.



8 Zeroing in on the subject

Behind everything that's going on in the painting, I want to showcase the story. The red arrows are indicators of shapes that point to where I want to focus the most, which is the main subject on the foreground – mainly to lead the viewer's eye to the character. I strategically highlight some hotspots to a certain degree, which blends and balances the overall aesthetic.





Photoshop CONSTRUCT A HUGE SCI-FI VEHICLE

Jan Urschel imagines a scene where vehicles as large as houses roam on foreign worlds, then uses photo textures to bring his big vision to life

A lot of imagery I use for my personal paintings these days has to do with architecture or vehicles on a very large scale.

My interest in vehicles probably stems from the days when I was a boy and my dad took me to car shows in Germany. While I don't have a vivid memory of those shows I think they left a lasting impression and appreciation of the thought that goes into the design and

1 Sketching it out

I have a rough idea in my head of what I want to do and select two or three photos that fit the mood – and more importantly the colour value I want to have. I establish the horizon line and roughly decide on the perspective. Since I'm going to be dealing with a huge object and I want to show it in whole, a flat perspective seems most fitting. At this stage I'm using a Texture brush with a large size to block in shapes.



2 Check the black and whites

I work in colour right from the beginning. Therefore it's paramount that I always check my black and white values (or luminosity) to make sure my image is built up properly from the start. (See Pro Secrets, on page 87, for how to do this easily). Throughout the whole image creation process I check my values again and again, right up to the last second.

Artist PROFILE

Jan Urschel
COUNTRY: Singapore



After years as a graphic designer, Jan studied for an entertainment

design diploma at FZD School of Design. Soon after graduation he was hired by LucasArts. Singapore to work as a concept designer
www.bit.ly/ix-jurschel

**DIRECT LINK FOR
WORKSHOP FILES**
www.bit.ly/92-vehicle

Shortcuts
Hide selection
Ctrl+H (PC)
Cmd+H (Mac)
When working with the Marquee and Lasso tools, I use this to hide the selection.

PRO SECRETS

Custom Eraser
Something very obvious but often overlooked. You can change the shape of the Eraser tip, just as you can change Brush tips. Make use of it to create interesting negative shapes or sharpen up, or soften, your edges.

engineering of vehicles. On the other hand, the fascination with everything on a massive scale comes from all the sci-fi and fantasy films from the late 70s and 80s I watched as a kid. A lot of artists also use this topic (Moebius, John Berkey, John Harris) and I'm glad I can contribute to the growing amount of grand scale art out there.

This time around I'm planning to paint a huge (in case that wasn't obvious

already) exploration vehicle placed on a foreign planet. However the focus of this painting will be the vehicle itself and not so much the environment and so I'll keep the latter quite low in detail – ideally just enough to provide a nice backdrop for the picture's centrepiece.

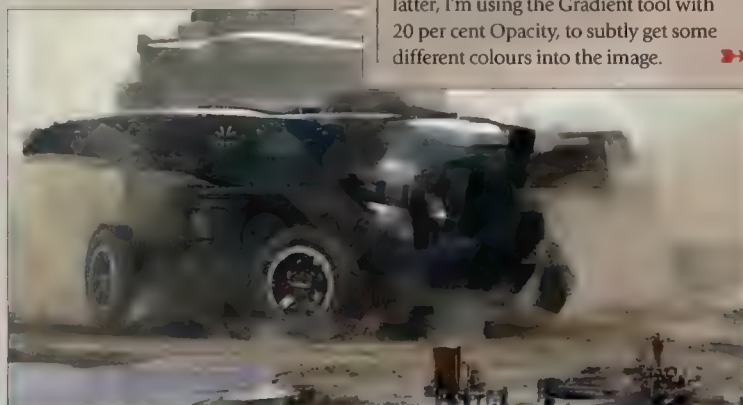
Regarding my process: I'm using a large amount of photos, for various purposes. I'll try to explain the most often-used ones as I go about creating the piece.

3 Format adjustment

I'm constantly evaluating the composition of my image. Not only where my elements are positioned but also how much of a particular value is in the various parts of the image (for example, how much dark value is on the right and on the left – I'm looking for a good balance). At this point I make the decision that the image is not working very well in this aspect ratio, so I change it into portrait format.

4 Initial colour correction

After I have a rough composition, I try to unify the colours of the photos I put together initially. For that I use a Color Balance Adjustment layer and also a new layer set to the Color Blend Mode. For the latter, I'm using the Gradient tool with 20 per cent Opacity, to subtly get some different colours into the image. ➔





5 Shape definition

Now it's time to clean up my focal point – the vehicle. Previously I used a very thick Texture brush for quick blocking in, to avoid getting into detail too quickly and to encourage happy accidents created by the brush itself. For the clean-up pass I reduce the tip size of my brush a little bit, but still have it fairly large. I always have an eye on my navigator and make sure the shapes read and look nice even in that small window.



WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES SOFT BRUSH

This is the standard soft brush with added Pressure Sensitivity for the size. This enables me to use it in Color Dodge Mode for the big areas as well as for the small specular highlights.

BLENDING BRUSH

This is a very heavy brush, which has Pressure Controlled Opacity. It also has soft edges and allows for super quick and seamless blending. Very useful.



6 Flipping the canvas

Similar to the black and white check I flip the canvas throughout the whole creation of my painting. I don't do it very often since I fix my composition and shapes very early on, but checking it once in a while definitely helps getting fresh eyes on my image.



7 Adding major detail

As a next step, I get into the larger details on the vehicle such as the tank between the wheels and other areas, to generally break up the previously established shapes and give them more variety. I'm also moulding the geometry to get a better idea of how all the different parts will fit together.

8 Introducing some photo-based details

One of the ways to indicate a really huge scale is the detail level. For this purpose photos are ideal as they can provide such high density detail that you would never be able to draw (or at least not in a reasonable time frame). When using photos from the internet you need to be careful, as they are mostly copyrighted. I use my own, or use them in a way that makes them completely unrecognisable from the original, just to be safe.

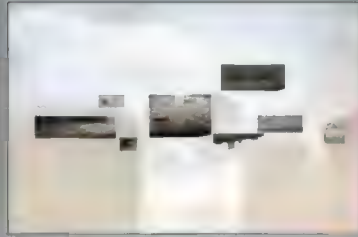


9 The details must make sense

Just because I'm looking for detail for an engine doesn't mean I use photos from an actual engine. I prefer to look for images that remind me of a particular part I have in mind. I'm also not just taking any old random image and sticking it in. Having a clear idea of what the function of it could be is important. I'm also not committed to using the photos I initially selected. I try them out, flip them around, use different blend modes, but if one doesn't fit, and doesn't improve the image, I throw it out and move on to the next one.

10 Surface detail

Photos can be used in many ways. Not only to add geometry but also tighten up existing surfaces. Adding cutlines, nuts and bolts, stickers, labels, graphic design and so on brings your design to life, adds another layer of believability and gives it the look of something assembled in a factory (by humans or others).



11 Changing your image

If I have been working on an image for quite some time and feel something is just not working out, I'm not afraid to change it. I'm prepared to change every part of the image, no matter how big or small, and no matter at what point in time (in the sketching stages, but also when the image is almost done) without hesitation. I decide to get rid of the foreground elements and replace them with something simpler.



12 Value separation and scale

It's the time to check my values on the big image again, and also in the navigator. I need to make sure all the shapes read nicely. I decide the trailer doesn't separate enough from the truck, so I add a layer of dust to push it further away, and get a nice read of the back detail. I also add more dust towards the lower half of the vehicle to push it back a bit more.

13 Final colour correction

I'm getting closer to the finish line. After adding all the additional details and trying my best to get the right value and colour, I add another Color Balance Adjustment layer on top. To give it some more pop, I, ever so subtly, push the shadows into blue and the highlights to a reddish tone. I also like to just yank the slider all the way to one side for certain values just to see what happens. Sometimes I get interesting results with that.



PRO SECRETS

Black and white check

Add a new Adjustment layer on top of your layer stack. Choose the Hue/Saturation option and move the Saturation slider to the left. Now you can turn it on and off and check that your values are correct.

14 Take a break

I'm aware that with tight deadlines artists often don't have the luxury to do this, but when you do, most of the time it's a real eye opener. Stepping away from your image for some time, even for a lunch break but ideally over night, really helps re-evaluate it, spot mistakes and often improve it dramatically. I do this and find a few issues that I want to correct, such as tangencies, and also add more detail in some areas.

Photoshop

GIVE STEAMPUNK A MODERN-DAY LOOK

From line art to finished rendering, **Michael Dashow** shares his process for painting a sexy but street-savvy steampunk mechanic

I fell in love with steampunk during CGSociety's 2009 Steampunk Myths & Legends challenge. As a judge for the competition, I was ineligible to win. However, the theme was so intriguing that I participated anyhow. Ever since then, I've been filling entire notebooks with sketches of sexy steampunk-influenced women.

The costuming is my favourite part, and my wife and I have also been working on our own outfits to wear to

local steampunk gatherings. While at science fiction and fantasy cons perhaps 10 per cent of the attendees dress in costume. However, at steampunk events nearly everyone makes some attempt at appropriate attire. It makes the events feel extremely inclusive and fun! It's great that there's no one proper way to do steampunk costuming. And all of that costuming is great fodder for new character ideas.

For this workshop, I'll create a character study with less detail to be spent on the

setting. I want to show a woman who isn't just there to be pretty but feels like she is actually working aboard an airship. I want to make her sexy without showing off a lot of cleavage or skin. I want her to feel decidedly steampunk despite the absence of some common signifiers such as a hat, skirts or bustle. And I plan on adding a few elements of contemporary flair to underscore the punk in steampunk. Hopefully all of these elements will gel into an interesting and sexy female steampunk character.

1 Start with a sketch

Once given the assignment, I start sketching characters in my notebook, looking for someone whose attitude and pose feels like it would be fun to paint for the workshop. I'm aiming for a sexy character who feels at home on an airship. I never stop at one sketch, and develop maybe 20 before I've got a small handful I'm really pleased with. (I've now got enough for a few more paintings!)



2 Refine the drawing

Scanning the final sketch into Photoshop, I start to refine the drawing. I flip the image to see where it's unintentionally lopsided: there's always something that's off. The sketch had no legs, and her back arm was in an undynamic pose, so I draw over those areas. I refine all of the costume details, changing the elements on her belt and the collar of her jacket. I give her shorter sleeves to show off an eventual tattoo.



Artist PROFILE

Michael Dashow

COUNTRY: US



Michael is the senior art director at San Francisco video games

company Kabam. He also works as an illustrator and especially loves painting within the genres of science fiction, fantasy, humour and steampunk.

www.bit.ly/ix-mdashow

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES

www.bit.ly/92-girl

3 Blocking in the colour

I turn the line art brown by adding a Hue/Saturation Adjustment layer (from the bottom icons on the Layer tab). I set that layer to Multiply so I can paint underneath it with the lines visible on top. I create new layers for each element that'll need a different colour: skin, hair, jacket, metal and so forth. In each, I fill the areas with a solid colour. I also give the background a tentative fill.



Shortcuts
Using Layers
Adjustment layers
I set the Hue/Saturation layer to Multiply so I can paint underneath it with the lines visible on top. I create new layers for each element that'll need a different colour: skin, hair, jacket, metal and so forth. In each, I fill the areas with a solid colour. I also give the background a tentative fill.





4 Colour adjustment

On a new layer, I airbrush in some rough shadows to provide an indication of where the light source will be. Then I use Image>Adjust>Hue/Saturation to adjust every single layer to arrive at colour combinations that could work. I do this a number of times, saving some screenshots to compare possible colour choices. I find a combination of rich, warm browns that I feel suit the steampunk theme best. And now I'm ready to really paint.

PRO SECRETS

Paint from real life

When painting a character, I often use real-life references to help me get the look right. For example, I might use a photo of a corset to get the right shape and texture. I also use a lot of reference photos of steampunk costumes to get the right details and textures. I find that using real-life references helps me to create a more realistic and detailed painting.



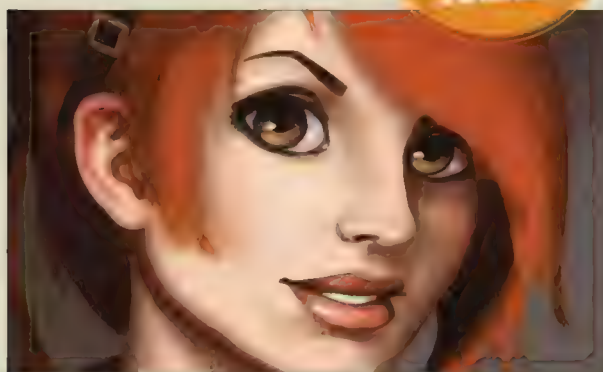
7 Detailing the clothing

The jacket is next. The process will be similar for every aspect of her clothing: pull up references, rough in the shadows and then detail using increasingly smaller brushes. The line art is a great guide on where to start placing the folds and seams, and the reference photos help me get the details right. It's important to keep the material in mind. The heavy cloth jacket diffuses light softly, while the leather corset, belts and pouches are more shiny.



8 Using vector points for stripes

Next, I paint our mechanic's trousers a single colour and add stripes on a separate layer. Then I create a new path in the Path window and use the Pen tool to draw them. I create as few vector points as possible, making it easy to adjust the curves by moving a single point on the path. I then load the path as a selection and use it as a mask for a Hue/Saturation Adjustment layer, making the stripes a darker colour.



5 Getting some face time

I always start with the face: if I'm not in love with that part, the entire image will be a failure. Using a simple, rough-edged oil brush, I add warm shadows and highlights to the skin. Some details, such as the eyes, go on a separate layer so that I can work as much as I want on the skin without accidentally colouring them. The hardest part here is adding the smile wrinkles while avoiding making her look too old.

6 Finishing up the skin, with reference

Next I move on to her arms and hands. For consistency, I frequently use the Eyedropper tool to grab colours I've already used in the face. My wife has posed for me so I can get some useful reference photos of the hand positioning, which I use to get the finger details right. To keep the skin from being too monotone, I create a new layer, set to Overlay, to add some subtle pinks to the fingers, ears and the cheeks.



9 Rendering those brassy bits

The specular light on metal is much sharper than on cloth. I fill the metal layer with dark brown, add some tan as a mid-tone, and paint sharp strokes with bright yellow for highlights. There shouldn't be much blending between the highlights and the middle-range colours. I vary my colours with each set of metal to ensure that the metal doesn't appear too uniform. I also punch up a few spots with the Dodge tool.



10 Hair today

Steampunk isn't necessarily about historical accuracy, so I opt for alternative expressions of individuality, starting with bright orange hair. My main weapons here are a brushy Oil brush for blocking in large areas and hair brushes made of small dots for rendering long plaits of hair. I make the hair look black in some areas and orange in others. At the end, I use a simple Sharp brush for rendering individual strands of hair to make it look more natural.



13 A wrench in the works

Using several photos of monkey wrenches as guides, I paint in the shadows on the giant wrench and emphasise the edges with a bright highlight. A hand-painted diamond pattern on the dial adds to the authenticity. I use a texture of weathered metal, and overlay it on top of the wrench to make it feel more appropriately metallic. I adjust the colour and paint in some shadows from her hand.



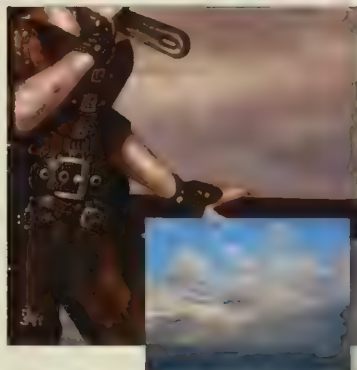
11 Time for grime

I want the character to look like she gets work done... and can get dirty in the process! I create a new layer and use a Chalk brush to add grime to her clothing and skin. On the face, I add the dirt to the lower portion, but keep the area around the eyes clean: that part would be covered by her goggles. I add scratches and weathering to her leather and some water-stains to her trousers.



12 Think about the ink

I specifically chose shorter sleeves to show off an interesting tattoo. I want to combine interlocking octopus tentacles and gears, both very steampunk. I scan my notebook sketches into Photoshop and choose the best one. I complete the drawing with a Pencil brush to give the impression of a complicated line-drawing. When I'm done, I use a Hue/Saturation Adjustment layer to tint the ink to a warmer colour and add a fill to make the tattoo pop from the arm more.



14 Airships ahoy!

I've intentionally left some room in the sky for some airships. They will help provide clues to this character's profession, as well as a little bit of drama. Plus I just love designing airships anyway! For my airships, I combine the sleek hulls of naval vessels, the rigid cylindrical bodies of zeppelins and the engines, propellers and wings of more contemporary aeroplanes. I end up creating several pages of sketches and scan them in, choosing three finalists. I set the line art to Multiply and work on a new layer underneath, rendering the ships in Greyscale.

15 Cloudy skies ahead

I think the scene calls for a dramatic, romantic sky to round it off. I've taken many photos of clouds down the years, with this type of thing in mind, and I use them as a guide for details. I use a Cloud brush with wispy edges, created by using the Render>Clouds filter and isolating one small part of the image to save as a brush. I build up the cloudscape slowly, with a low-opacity brush, and I work in yellows, oranges and desaturated reds as the sky cools at the bottom.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

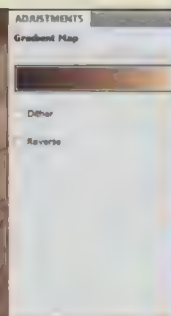
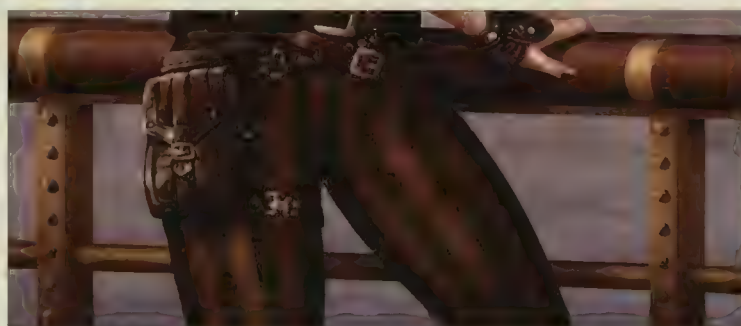
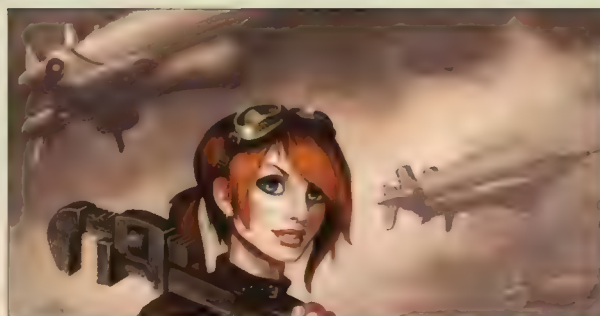


16 Colouring the airships

Once the sky is detailed with its final palette, I return to the airships and use a Gradient Map Adjustment layer to tint them to fit the environment. More accurately, I use three different layers as the ships need different treatments depending on their distance from us and how much atmospheric hazing they receive. I add some hints of colour and plating details to the front ship, less to the middle and none to the furthest.

17 Nailing the railing

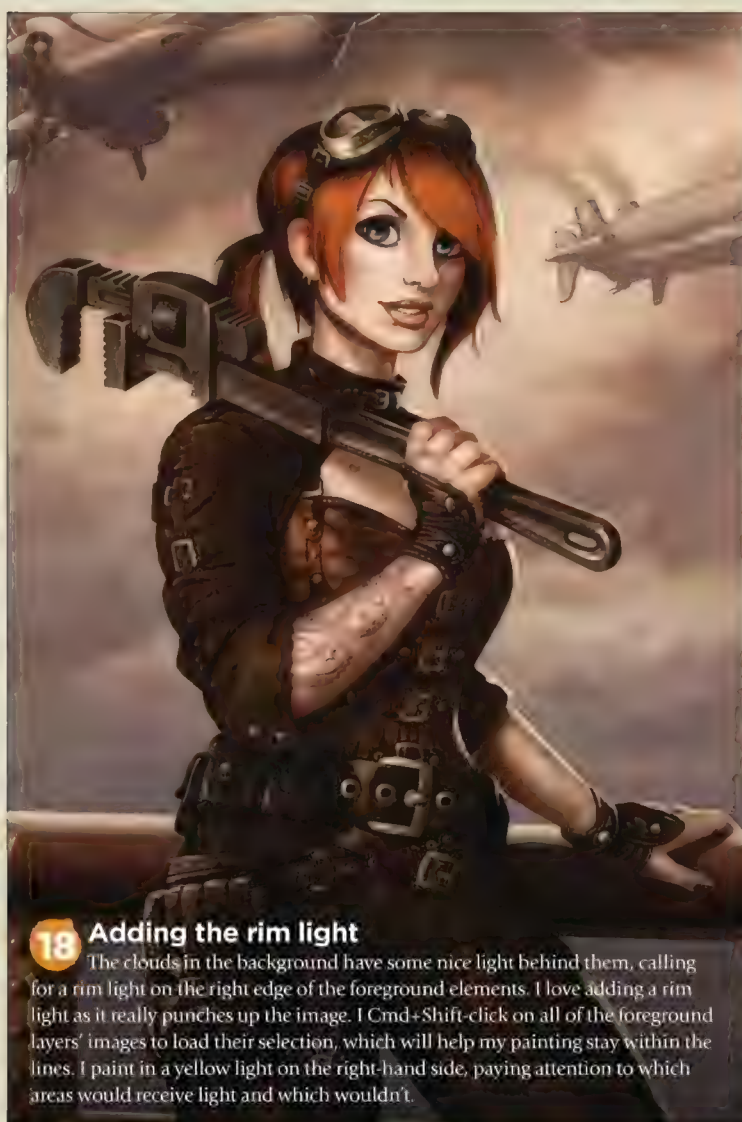
I fill the railing with brown and overlay a wood photo on top. I build up the metal parts of the railing one surface at a time, adding a base, vertical strut fronts, sides and bevel, as well as bands around the wood. Each section gets coloured brown and highlighted with a lighter yellow. I paint a single bolt and duplicate it. Finally, I paint in grime and go over the entire railing to vary the details and add appropriate shadows.



PRO SECRETS

Use two windows

When working on a large image, it's often helpful to have two windows open. One window can show the entire image, while the other can show a close-up of the area you're working on. This allows you to see the overall composition and make adjustments as needed. You can also use the two windows to compare different versions of the image or to see how different layers affect the final result.



18 Adding the rim light

The clouds in the background have some nice light behind them, calling for a rim light on the right edge of the foreground elements. I love adding a rim light as it really punches up the image. I Cmd+Shift-click on all of the foreground layers' images to load their selection, which will help my painting stay within the lines. I paint in a yellow light on the right-hand side, paying attention to which areas would receive light and which wouldn't.

19 Finishing touches

There are a few odds and ends left. I touch up her smile and her make-up and add some more highlights to her hair. I adjust the levels and the saturation all around the picture. I add a layer of noise over the top of the entire image to give it a bit of tooth when viewed close up or in print and keep it from looking too smooth and digital. With those small tweaks, I consider the piece done!



Paint Tool SAI

SET SAI'S BRUSH PARAMETERS



The brush parameters determine what the tools in Paint Tool SAI can and can't do. **Paco Rico Torres** explains the basics

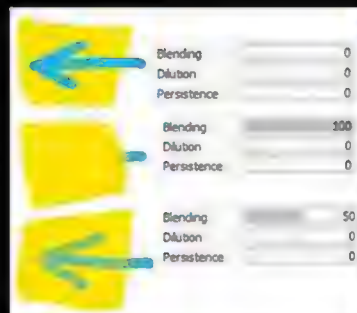
Paint Tool SAI's brushes can look confusing initially, but they're pretty easy to use once you know what they do. The first thing you'll notice is that not all the tools have the same kind, or the same amount, of parameters. That's because not all the tools are intended to perform the same task. There are some brush parameters that are pretty intuitive, such

as Brush size, but others are more difficult to understand. I'm going to focus on the three most complex parameters: Blending, Dilution and Persistence.

Previously I've discussed how brushes blend and/or dilute colours. So let's talk about how to choose the right amount of Blending and Dilution. The parameters work best if combined, so spend some time experimenting with them.

1 Blending

The Blending parameter controls how much a brush will blend on the digital canvas. Blending in Paint Tool SAI is similar to blending with oils or acrylics. If you start with a yellow surface on a layer and you then paint with blue, you can easily mix it until you produce green. A brush with Blending set to 0 will just paint. In contrast, with the Blending set to 100 it'll blend the colours on the canvas.



2 Dilution

The Dilution setting is similar to adding Dutch varnish to oils. It makes the paint more transparent, and at the same time blends the already painted colours on the canvas. So a brush with Blending and Dilution set to 50 paints with a semi-transparent blue colour and blends, while a brush with Blending and Dilution set to 100 will work like water-painting: it blends the colours until they're transparent (similar to a stump).



3 Persistence

This setting determines how much the colour you're using is affected by the Blending parameter. If you have a high persistence value, the colour you're using can be blended with the colour on the canvas, but the colour in the brush predominates over the one on the canvas. It's only useful when combined with the Blending parameter. With these three parameters you can create the perfect brush for every situation.



Artist PROFILE

Paco Rico Torres
COUNTRY: Spain



Paco is a freelance illustrator who's worked on art for several card games, magazines and books.
www.bit.ly/1fx-paco

COMMON BRUSH PARAMETERS

A. Edge shape

With this you can choose between a Soft, a Hard and two Medium brushes.

B. Density and size

Enables you to control the opacity of the brush, and maximum and minimum sizes.

C. Brush variables

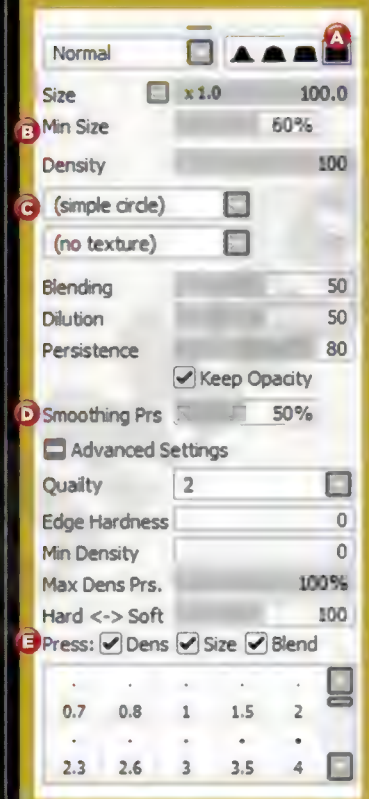
To select shapes and textures. Sliders on right change intensity of shape and texture.

D. Smoothing pressure

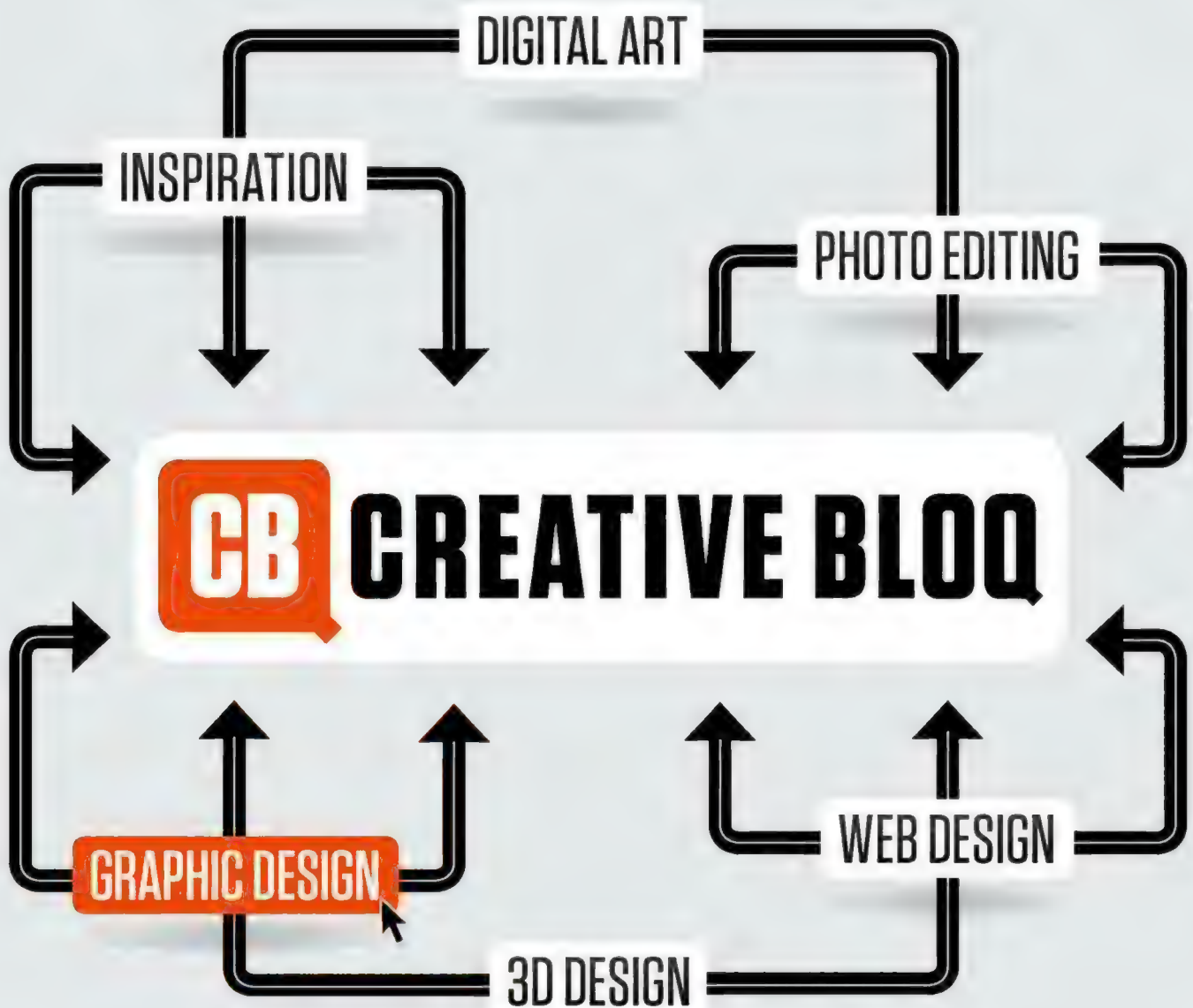
Lets you set a minimum pressure value. Press with pen below value and it'll blend.

E. Density, size and blending settings

Alter density, size and blending of a brush by pressing harder or softer with your pen.



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ISSUE 93 ON SALE FRIDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2013

Photoshop

MIX 'N' MATCH YOUR FANTASY SOURCES

Mark Molnar combines a childhood favourite game with a classic seafaring story to create an exotic environment with a strong focus

Artist PROFILE

Mark Molnar

Illustrator



Mark Molnar is a digital artist and illustrator. He has worked on various projects, including book covers and character designs. He is known for his detailed and atmospheric artwork.

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES

In most of my work I paint realistic-looking images and use a lot of textures to achieve a cinematic look, but for this workshop I want to do something a bit different. I always like to experiment with various elements, because it forces me to get out of my comfort zone and helps to keep my ideas fresh.

The first thing that pops into my mind when I hear the theme is steampunk pirates is one of my favourite games from the 1990s: The Secret of Monkey Island. The cartoon style of the original point-and-click adventure game is a great starting point, but I also want to make the image suitable for today's visual aesthetics that are used in the animation industry.

I imagine a 3D animation feature, where the environment is realistic, but the characters and the overall world have a bit of a stylised feel. My goal is to recreate a similar mood to the classic pirate world of the game while mixing it with steampunk elements. Pirates of the Monkey Island meets Captain Nemo – sounds like great fun to me!



1 Composition thumbnail

As a first step I create a quick thumbnail sketch to block in the composition of the whole image. I have a pretty solid idea of what I'd like to do: I imagined a scene where the pirates have arrived at their secret Caribbean hideout and they're just starting to celebrate their latest victorious raid. I want to place their steam-powered, Captain Nemo-style submarine beached in a bay of a Caribbean island, so I decide on a point of view that's up in the hill, creating a viewpoint that feels almost like an aerial shot.

WATCH THIS!



2 Start with a colour rough

I create a colour layer and start to block in the main areas of lights. I break up the image with two main light sources: the cold light of the moon and the warm lights of the lamps. I now add four different light spots to the image to enhance the focal points: the greenish lights of the pirates' drinks, the lit swimming pool, the red eye of the robot and the bright orange lights of the submarine in the background. These lights all help to lead the eye of the viewer through the image and to tell the story.



3 Separate off the background

When working with large-scale environments, I try to break the space up into easily manageable sections. I always start with the background and move towards the foreground. I create separate layer groups for the bigger areas of the image: the ocean, the sky with the clouds and the mountain ranges with all mountains on their own layers. This becomes helpful if I need to create atmospheric perspective, because I can easily adjust the values of the various layers and add fog or mist between the different elements of the environment.

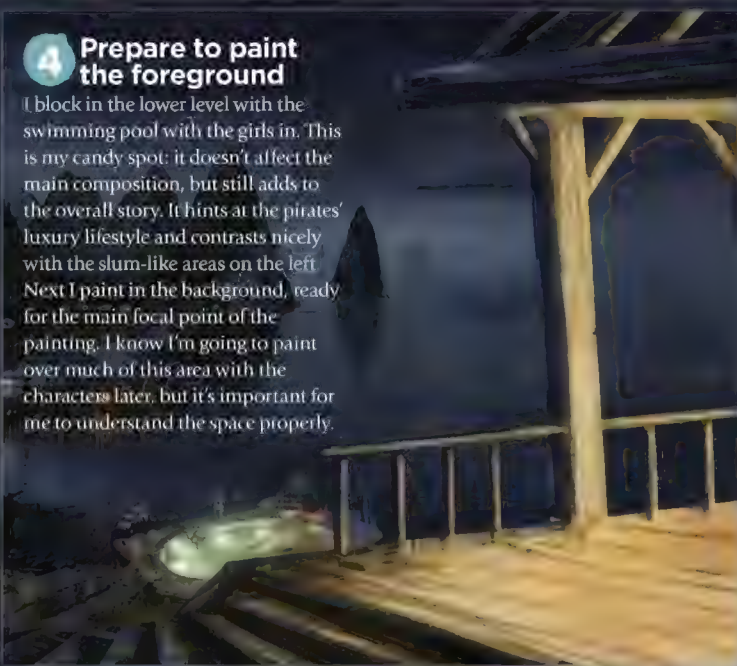
PRO SECRETS

Making waves

When creating the waves in the background, I used a combination of procedural and hand-painted techniques. I created a base layer for the waves and then added detail and color to the individual waves. This allowed me to create a sense of movement and depth in the background.

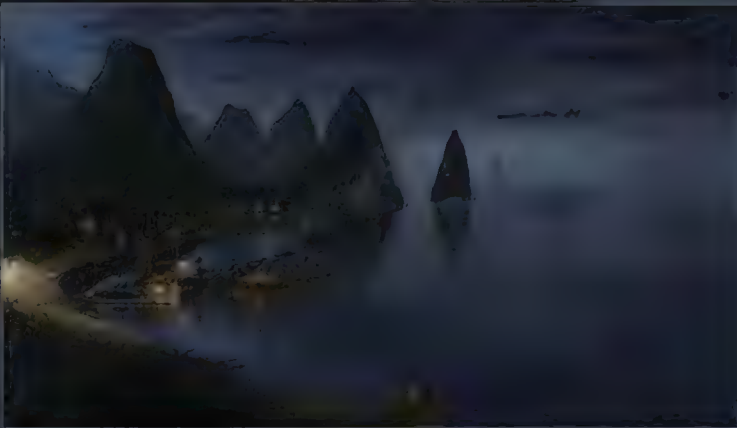
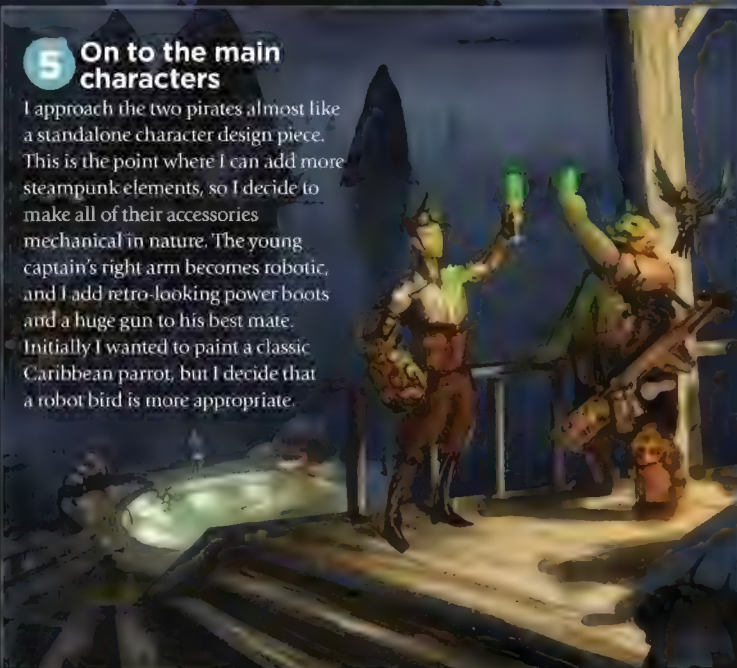
4 Prepare to paint the foreground

I block in the lower level with the swimming pool with the girls in. This is my candy spot: it doesn't affect the main composition, but still adds to the overall story. It hints at the pirates' luxury lifestyle and contrasts nicely with the slum-like areas on the left. Next I paint in the background, ready for the main focal point of the painting. I know I'm going to paint over much of this area with the characters later, but it's important for me to understand the space properly.



5 On to the main characters

I approach the two pirates almost like a standalone character design piece. This is the point where I can add more steampunk elements, so I decide to make all of their accessories mechanical in nature. The young captain's right arm becomes robotic, and I add retro-looking power boots and a huge gun to his best mate. Initially I wanted to paint a classic Caribbean parrot, but I decide that a robot bird is more appropriate.



6 Finishing the rough sketch

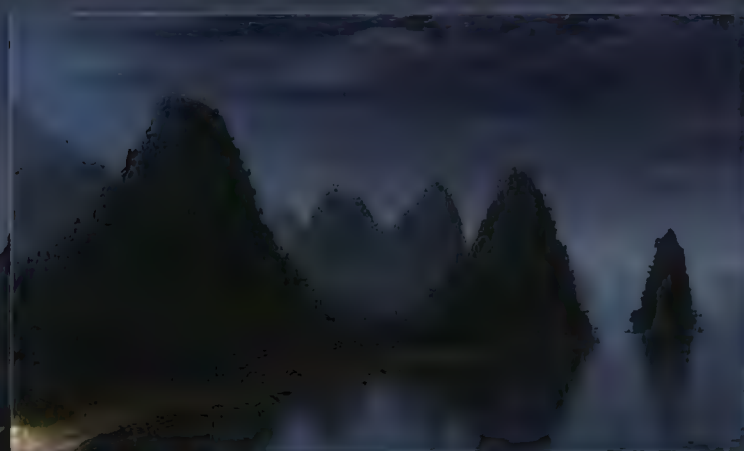
I paint the robot coming up the steps and the artificial chameleon on the balcony roof. These minor characters strengthen the composition. The robot is a nice secondary focal point and leads the viewer's eye towards the ship, while the shape of the chameleon's body points towards the main characters. I add some bigger palm trees between the middle-ground level and the foreground to enhance the feel of space and perspective, and to frame the illustration. The guy on the right serves the same purpose and also helps to bring the viewer into the scene, because we're peering into the scene over his shoulders.



PRO SECRETS

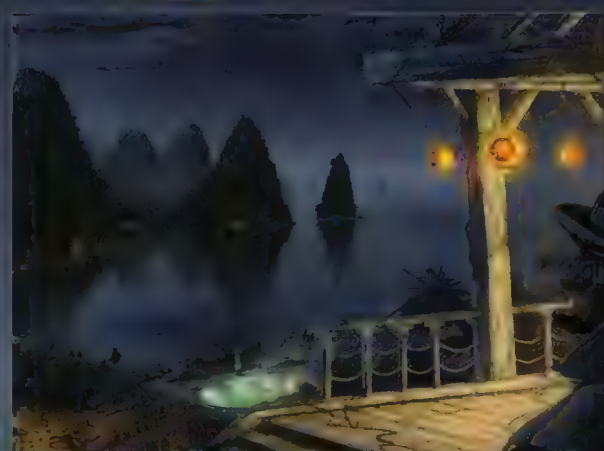
Anatomy tweaks

When I came to the robot, I realised I had made it look a bit too mechanical. I added some more organic shapes to its body, like a small tentacle-like appendage, to make it feel more like a living creature. I also tweaked the chameleon's body to make it look more like a real chameleon, with some more detail and texture. Finally, I added some more detail to the palm trees and the ship in the background to make the scene feel more complete.



7 Detailing the background

I delete any unnecessary layers and flatten the coherent layers. Now I can start on the background. This is going to dictate the minimum level of detail to apply to the whole image. I want to enhance the sky, so I add some stars and paint in the clouds properly. I add detail to the mountains, focusing on the silhouettes, mainly by breaking up their outlines with trees and the occasional rocky outcrop. I keep everything pretty loose, because details in the distance become lost through atmospheric perspective.



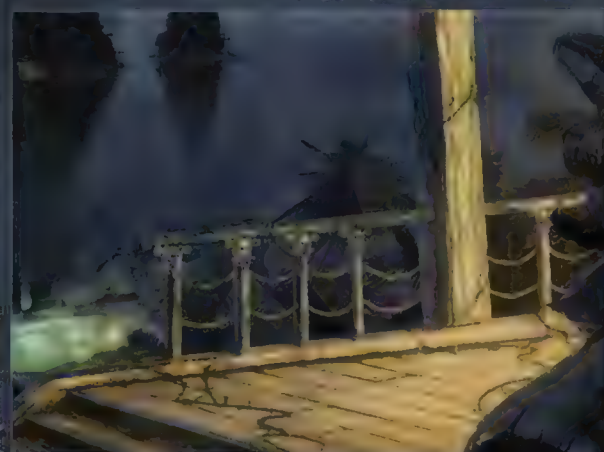
9 Light considerations

I correct the perspective of the stairs and roof, then I paint in the main lit and shadow areas. This is the area where my two main light sources meet, so I need to be careful with the planes of the shapes; the right side of each object is affected by the warm light coming from the right, while the left sides are affected by the cold blue moonlight. I also bring back the rice lamps from the sketch stage, for a third light source.



8 Painting the pool scene

As well as painting in the three girls hanging out at the pool, I want to match every detail with the rest of the scene's narrative. I add huge metal water tanks and heating pipes, then paint in some folding beach beds around the pool for the girls, a small glass table, champagne in an ice bucket and three glasses for the girls. These small details might seem unnecessary, but together they help to elevate a stylised image, and even make the scene more believable.



10 Historical details

I want add an intricate steel fence to the terrace, similar to the Parisian balconies from the late-18th century, but I realise it won't match the Caribbean surroundings. So I try to recreate something similar, but carved from wood and in the style of a pirate setting. As a final touch I paint in two lengths of rope and add vines to the terrace, to indicate that it's on the edge of the jungle.

11 Behold the Rusty Rat

Because the ship is the most important feature of the background I want to paint it separately. I imagine a huge, steam-powered submarine, something like Captain Nemo's, but with a more modern design. I want to avoid the typical brass and bronze look. I paint the Rusty Rat using mainly the desaturated blues of the moonlight and add warm, reddish browns to suggest that the vessel is heavily rusted and has seen a lot of action. For a sense of scale I paint people around the ship and on the beach.



12 Designing the robot

In my steampunk world, robots should be the lowest ranked crew on a pirate ship. I continue the same design language that I started with the ship, because it's important that they belong together. I avoid a sleek sci-fi look and instead go with more bulky proportions: big shoulder plates and larger hands, for example.



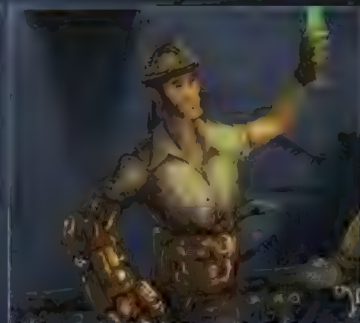
13 Reflective surface

The robot's metal body isn't smooth and clean, but is still able to reflect the surrounding colours, such as the brown of the boxes or the moonlight mirrored on its head and shoulders. This not only gives the robot a realistic finish, but also contrasts nicely with the matte finish of the wooden boxes that it's carrying. I give it a red light, because I want to use a different colour for all the mechanical beings in the image. As a warm colour, the red connects to the other orange lights used by the humans, but it's saturated enough to suggest that it's also something quite different.



14 Enhancing the pirates

I return to the pirates and detail them with storytelling elements. I change the face of the young captain and add a neat beard. I try to use hair and facial hair styles from the early 1900s and paint matching accessories, such as the hat and goggles. I stick with simple costumes like shirts and trousers, because I want to make the steampunk elements to be the dominant and most interesting parts of the pirate costumes.



WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUT OUT BRUSHES

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CUT OUT BRUSHES

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PHOTOSHOP

CUT OUT BRUSHES

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PHOTOSHOP

CUT OUT BRUSHES

15 Lighting tweaks

I use the warm lights from the left and from the rice lamps as the main light source and the moonlight as a rim light. From the first sketch I thought it would be cool to have some strange, glowing drink in the pirates' hands, and this gives me the chance to use the greenish light of the glasses as fill lights. I also paint in some cast shadows of other people on the ground, which helps to suggest this world continues outside the canvas.



16 Fixing the composition

By flipping the canvas I realise the background looks like everything's on a slope and leans towards the left. I flatten the whole background and correct the perspective using Free Transform. I adjust the angle of the ship and the horizon to match the new perspective. The middle-ground is hard to read, so I scale down the pool and resize the closest shack. The result is a cleaner space segmentation, where the viewer can clearly see what's closer and what's further away. To match the foreground to this new perspective I group all my foreground layers and adjust them to my new perspective grid.

17 Changing the drinks order

I decide to adjust the colour of the drinks, because the glowing green looks unnatural, even in this imagined world. The liquid is too saturated and stands out from the rest of the image. I tweak the saturation and contrast level of both characters and then move onto painting the fine details.



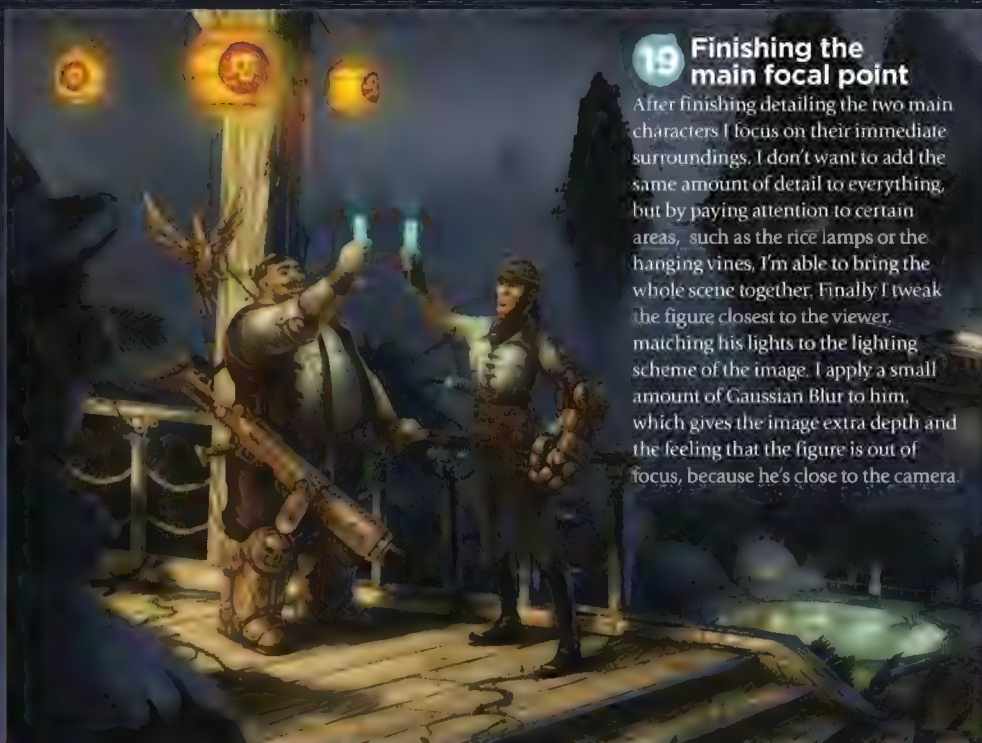
18 Detailing the lieutenant

To make both characters pop from the background and to be the main focal point of the image, I have to bring them up to the same level of detail. Although the image is a bit cartoony, I want to give all the materials enough realism. I bear in mind the various reflective qualities of the different materials: the almost fully matte surface of the lieutenant's cotton clothes; the semi-reflective quality of the leather pouches on his belt; and the shiny brass surface quality of his gun.



19 Finishing the main focal point

After finishing detailing the two main characters I focus on their immediate surroundings. I don't want to add the same amount of detail to everything, but by paying attention to certain areas, such as the rice lamps or the hanging vines, I'm able to bring the whole scene together. Finally I tweak the figure closest to the viewer, matching his lights to the lighting scheme of the image. I apply a small amount of Gaussian Blur to him, which gives the image extra depth and the feeling that the figure is out of focus, because he's close to the camera.



20 Final corrections

After I finish the painting I flip back the image to its original orientation and flatten all the major elements. I adjust their saturations, contrast and values, using adjustment layers, and strengthen the atmospheric perspective between them. Then I grab some textures from my library and drop them on an Overlay layer on a low Opacity. This helps to add the feeling of an extra level of detail to everything and also bakes the colour of the image together. I flatten the whole image, correct the balance of the final values, keeping in mind the focal point, and voilà! Welcome in the world of my steampunk pirates!

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BALLISTIC PUBLISHING'S MASSIVE BLACK VOLUME TWO

For close to a decade, concept art studio Massive Black has created artwork, illustration, and animation for some of the biggest games, movies, and TV shows known today. This book is the second volume of their work available in print.



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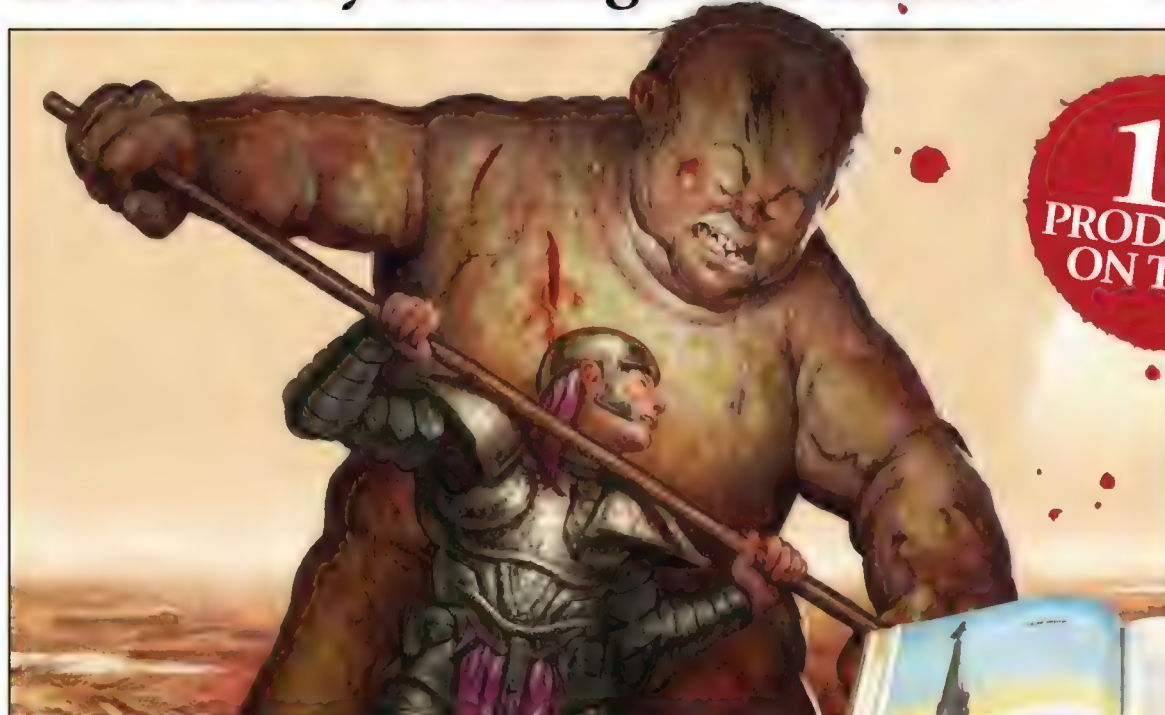
/ B A L L I S T I C /

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX Reviews



Artist's Choice Award
Software and hardware with a five-star rating receives the IFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...



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ON TEST



SOFTWARE & HARDWARE

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106 STM Tracer Deluxe Stylus

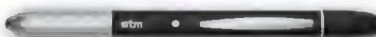
The four-in-one stylus even includes a Phillips screwdriver.

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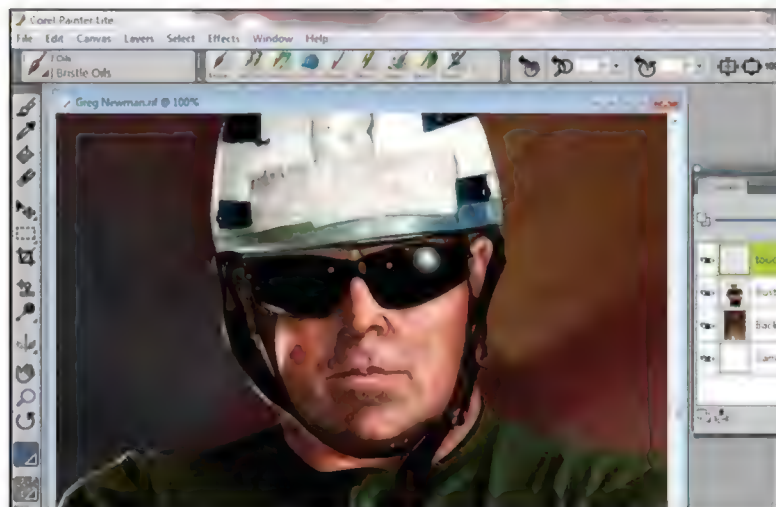
We review the film and chat to its concept artist Daren Horley.



RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent ★★★★★ Good ★★★★★ Ordinary ★★★★★ Poor ★★★★★ Atrocious

Freelance illustrator
Simon Dominic
painted this image
of epic struggle
using Painter Lite.





Greg Newman created Rusty using Corel Painter Lite. The painting is testament to how versatile the software is.

Painter Lite

COREL VALUES We love Painter 12, but can a stripped-back version muster similar levels of excitement?

Price £55 **Company** Corel **Web** www.corel.com **Contact** Via website

Corel Painter 12 currently rules the roost of fine art programs. It aims to replicate the fluidity and infinitesimal range of a good ol' physical canvas and brush, and it does so in a way that verges on a perfect simulation. Painter Lite, as its name suggests, pares the software back to its core features, as well as dropping the price substantially.

Where Painter, and its Lite version, is at its best is in its detailed replication of brushes and techniques. The first brush you're presented with in Lite, a clumpy acrylic, starts out with a bold dash of colour before quickly fading away – just like the real thing. There are no magic infinite lines here, and it takes effort to put stylus to tablet.

Painter Lite comes with a whopping 97 brushes, including airbrushes, watercolours, oils and sponges. Each of these has its own range of settings, enabling you to alter the size and opacity of the brush, as well as its wetness and the viscosity of the virtual paint. A nice touch is the ability to use a palette-style mixer instead of the usual RGB to create custom colours.

On top of these hugely accurate recreations of real-world instruments and substances lie a few digital effects, which couldn't be recreated on an easel. Mirror painting casts a line or two through the canvas and duplicates whatever you paint on either side, whereas Kaleidoscope gives you

multiple planes at equal angles. Both can be used to create surreal, Rorschach-style compositions.

The results are almost indistinguishable from real paintings, and we found ourselves remembering long-lost painting techniques, such as using a palette knife to scrape lines across our work. Everything you put

“Everything you put down acts like fresh paint, and blends and smears as it would on canvas”

down acts like fresh paint, and blends and smears as it would on canvas.

Painter Lite isn't quite as fully featured as its bigger brother. You won't find settings for brush angle here, nor support for Photoshop files or vector art. The layout and interface is very similar though, and Lite feels like a good way to get started before upgrading to the full-flavoured version.

In fact, we'd recommend Painter Lite as one of the best ways to move from traditional artforms to digital ones, even if you've been doing acrylics for 50 years. Perversely, it works the other way, too, as a stepping stone for digital artists who want to get back into conventional painting. ●

DETAILS

Features

- 16 brush categories
- 97 brush variants
- Blenders and palette knives
- Kaleidoscope and mirror painting
- 10 paper textures
- Canvas control
- Colour mixing
- Wacom compatibility
- Output to RIFF, TIFF, PNG, PSD and JPEG

System Requirements

PC: Microsoft Windows 8, 7, Vista or XP, 1GHz processor, 1GB RAM, 150MB hard disk space, 1,280x800 display resolution, DVD drive
Mac: OS X 10.6, Intel Core Duo CPU, 1GB RAM, 150MB hard disk space, 1,280x800 resolution, DVD drive

Rating



ARTIST INTERVIEW

SIMON DOMINIC

The digital artist discusses the pros and cons of Painter software

Is Painter the only software package you use?

Pretty much. I use Painter for all my commercial work right now.

Did you start out as an artist using more conventional, non-digital mediums?

I didn't get into artwork until quite late in life so I went direct to digital. I mucked around with Corel PHOTO-PAINT for a few months (anyone remember that?) before getting a Wacom and my first copy of Painter – version 7 I think it was.

How good a job do you think Painter Lite does of emulating traditional methods?

Corel has recently made some significant advances in emulating natural media, most notably with its watercolour brushes, which are particularly impressive. I find the new Real Oil brushes to be less convincing in terms of replicating actual oil paints, but Painter's range of oil options are still very effective for texture and colour work.

What are your favourite things about Painter?

The interaction of digital paint strokes on the canvas is a big deal for me and Painter handles this really well. The wealth of brush configuration options mean it's possible to meld the conveniences of digital with the aesthetics of real media and effectively get the best of both worlds. Other selling points are the new interface and the configurable shortcuts such as the colour-picking tool.

What would you like to see added to Painter in the future?

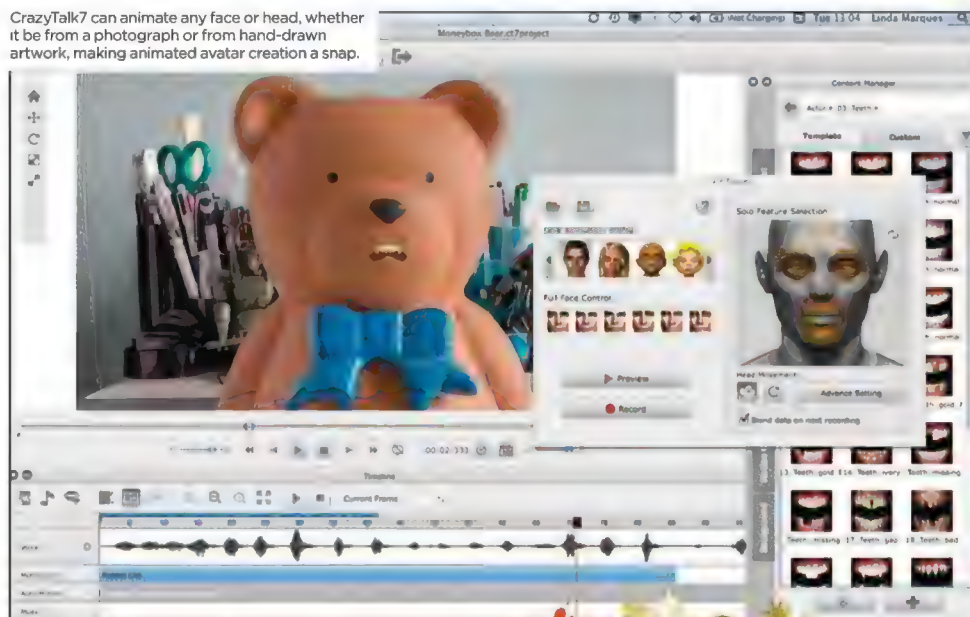
Painter desperately needs to rework its Mixer and Colour Set tools. Both could be real assets if developed from the token options they are at present. I'd also like to see improved natural media options for Real Oils and a new blur attribute for all brushes.



Simon is a self-taught freelance illustrator who specialises in fantasy, sci-fi and horror for game art, books and more.

www.painterly.co.uk

CrazyTalk7 can animate any face or head, whether it be from a photograph or from hand-drawn artwork, making animated avatar creation a snap.



CrazyTalk7 MAC ONLY

MAD CHAT CrazyTalk7 debuts on the Mac and claims some new tools to improve your head animations

Price £21 (Apple App Store) **Company** Realtoon **Web** www.realtoon.com **Contact** via website

CrazyTalk7 can best be described as a fun animation tool, and version seven not only brings new tools but also an Apple Mac release.

One of the best features of CrazyTalk7 is the new auto-motion system. In previous versions it was all too easy to end up with dead-head syndrome with just the lips moving, unless one spent time carefully animating the characters head. Now the audio track is analysed and the head is automatically animated, reacting to the nuances in the soundtrack. This can be controlled by a series of sliders for additional tweaking as well as being able to

choose from an extensive library head and face motions.

In addition to the audio-driven auto-motions, there's an extensive motion clip library in the content manager that enables you to choose from a range of expressions, emotions and movement. These clips are not audio based and appear in their own track in the timeline, so they can be edited.

Finally, for complete control there's a mouse-driven facial puppeteering system. This makes it possible to make multiple separate recordings of various aspects of the head and face, which appear in the timeline as a separate editable track. CrazyTalk7 is a hoot to use and at £21 it really is a bargain for creating talking avatars.



Animating is easy. Having applied an automatic lip-synced audio file, the real-time puppeteering panel can add bespoke facial motions.

DETAILS

Features

- Take photos and artwork of faces and bring them to animated life
- Use your webcam to capture faces for the fitting process
- Layer-based head and facial puppeteering system
- Automatic lip-syncing to MP3, text to speech and direct audio recordings
- Voice morpher/ changer
- Text to speech conversion
- Full support for automatic head
- Keyframes and clip editing
- Load images as a static background
- Export as video, image sequences and still images

System Requirements

Mac Only: OS X Lion 10.7.5 or later

Rating



The versatile stylus comes with red and black ink, but can be filled with any colour.



STM Tracer Deluxe Stylus iPad

FOUR TOPS The four-in-one stylus even includes a Phillips screwdriver

Price £23

Company STM

Web www.stmbags.com

RATING

We've already seen two-in-one devices, such as the Adonit Jot Flip, which combines a stylus with a more conventional ink-based pen. Not to be outdone, Aussie bag manufacturer STM has upped the ante by creating a four-in-one device. The Tracer Deluxe Stylus features a stylus, two pens, a sim ejector, and even a Pentolobe and Phillips-headed screwdriver.

The sim ejector and screwdriver are squarely designed for accessing the nether regions of your iPad, and the device just about holds up as a usable stylus, too.

It feels weighty and well-balanced, thanks to its aluminium house. However, the stylus itself is of the big rubbery inaccurate variety, rather than Adonit's precise, funny plastic disk.

The two pens come pre-filled with red and black ink, but these can be swapped with universal mini-pen refills in any colour you want.

That said, they're standard ballpoints so they're not great for artists really, but they do the job for quick sketches when your iPad's out of juice.

So all in all, it's a handy little tool to carry around with you, but we won't be putting down the Adonit just yet.



Surprisingly adept, it even has that lovely Cyan LED we all go "Oooohhh" at.



Pogo Connect

PUSH IT Ten One Design adds pressure sensitivity to its styli range

Price \$80

Company Ten One Design

Web www.tenonedesign.com

RATING

When we first heard about the new Pogo stylus, one that was going to bring pressure sensitivity to the iPad via Bluetooth, we were a little sceptical. The first-generation Pogos, although extremely affordable, were found wanting on build quality, so it was a pleasant surprise then when we unboxed the Pogo Connect.

With its 130mm aluminium barrel, pleasingly low-profile button and amply weighted feel – part of which is the AAA battery housed within, which Ten One Design claims lasts for months due to clever power-management – the Connect is an evolutionary leap forward and one that certainly warrants an artist's investment.

Even with the resistance of the deforming rubber nib the pressure sensitivity feels more evident than other pressure-sensitive styli we've tested. For example, we clearly noted greater consistency in line/tonal graduation when we were sketching in Procreate.

Handily, the nibs are magnetically attached and replaceable, too. We're hoping this is a hint that the rough-texture Sketch Pro nib might also be available for the Connect stylus in the near future.



iClone5 Pro 5.3

PC ONLY

MODEL BEHAVIOUR A real-time 3D animation and film-making app for Machinima and pre-visualisation

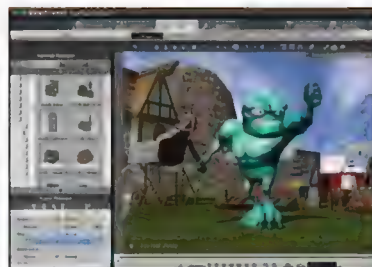
Price \$200 **Company** Reallusion **Web** www.reallusion.com **Contact** Via website

iClone5 is a 3D animation tool built around game engine technology that leverages your graphics card for real-time 3D. Although aimed squarely at the 3D animation market, the new features offer digital artists a cost-effective solution for rendering storyboards or bringing those illustrations to animated life. Better still, there's support for stereo 3D output, too.

iClone5 is not a modelling program per se. Instead, it comes with an extensive library of pre-rigged assets that can be expanded with additional content, which can be purchased from Reallusion's online content stores. This is a boon to storyboard artists because there are many genre assets available.

The characters are pre-rigged for animation and posing, and can be modified extensively by changing all body proportions. In addition, you can link to your favourite image editor and use this for easy painting and image editing of the clothing textures, allowing for further alterations.

iClone's output is typical of a game engine featuring 3D shaded assets with support for Normal mapping to improve realism. This output could, of



A range of Post FX filters make colour correction and balancing, camera blur and more possible.

course, be taken into a digital paint package for manipulation. Now however, iClone5 supports a real-timetoon-shader for the classic cartoon look, with variable line width control as well as an ambient occlusion shader.

There are a range of Post FX filters that enable camera blur, basic colour correction and colour balancing, as well as an NPR sketch filter that's separate to the direct toon-shader.

iClone is focused on real-time animation, so don't expect its cartoon and NPR shaders to be as advanced as those in major 3D applications. However, if your market is character-centric storyboarding and animated pre-visualisation then iClone5 Pro is an excellent option for speedy creation.

DETAILS

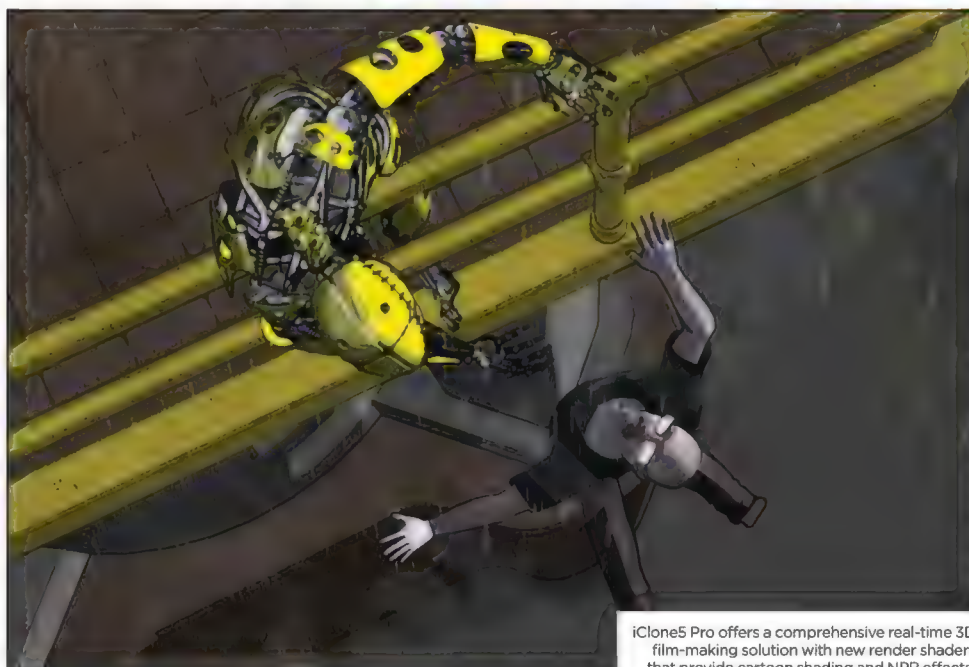
Features

- Animated animation
- Physics simulation
- Rigging and posing
- Real-time rendering
- Customizable shaders
- Ambient occlusion
- NPR sketch filter
- Camera blur
- Color correction
- Color balancing
- Post FX filters
- Stereo 3D output
- Real-timetoon-shader
- Variable line width control
- Ambient occlusion shader

System Requirements

- OS: Windows 7, Vista, XP
- Processor: 2.0 GHz or faster
- RAM: 2 GB or more
- Hard disk space: 1 GB or more
- Graphics card: NVIDIA GeForce 8 or better, ATI Radeon HD 2600 or better
- DirectX: 9.0c or later
- Internet: Broadband connection
- Sound: Windows compatible
- Mouse: Windows compatible
- Keyboard: Windows compatible

Rating



iClone5 Pro offers a comprehensive real-time 3D film-making solution with new render shaders that provide cartoon shading and NPR effects.



Steampunk: An Illustrated History

COGGED UP An authoritative guide to the origins, mythology and all things steampunk

Author Brian J Robb **Publisher** Aurum Press **Price** £25
Web www.aurumpress.co.uk **Available** Now

If you haven't fully immersed yourself in the world of steampunk yet, Brian J Robb's authoritative and in-depth compendium of all things clockwork will sate your appetite. It's a well-researched and wordy volume, and one that sheds light on the mysterious and amorphous cultural phenomenon.

Brian looks at steampunk's influences, notably 19th-century works from the likes of Jules Verne (Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea) and HG Wells (The War of the Worlds), who defined what would become science-fiction and were pivotal in the later creation of steampunk. The mantle was passed on to Edgar Rice Burroughs (John Carter of Mars), before the scene dipped during the First and Second World Wars. The seeds of modern steampunk were sewn in the 60s and 70s by a trio of sci-fi authors: Michael Moorcock, KW Jeter and James Blaylock. Indeed, James adds a foreword to this tome.

In early steampunk, sheer imagination often eclipsed poor research. Americans KW and James created worlds based on 19th-century literature, as James explains: "I know very little about history, and what I do know I stole from Dickens and other

writers". They also didn't realise they were creating a new genre, and only coined the term steampunk when quizzed by a magazine.

From these humble beginnings, steampunk grew throughout the 80s and has become a hugely popular sub-genre. Films such as Wild Wild West and Hellboy brought it to the forefront of cinema, while Thief: The Dark Project and Final Fantasy VI introduced bizarre mechanical worlds

to gamers. They're all covered in great detail here, and it's testament to how penetrative the aesthetic has become across mediums.

Steampunk, is defined by a certain mix of nostalgia and contemporary influences. These are worlds in which wars never happened, and feminist heroines stand shoulder-to-

shoulder with rugged heroes. Its origins as a literary movement have oddly been forgotten, as the author admits.

Art isn't dealt with until a brief part of the final chapter, which also covers cosplayers and steampunk creations. But An Illustrated History still stands as a fantastic way to gain knowledge on the subject, and ground your creations in theory and mythology. An essential addition to any retro-futurist bookcase.

RATING



Further reading...

Two Art of... books: one for a video game, one with Alec Baldwin in

The Art of Assassin's Creed 3

Author Andy McVittie

Publisher Titan Books **Price** £25

Available Now

RATING



A breathtaking reminder of the sheer amount of work that goes into a modern AAA game, The Art of Assassin's Creed III compiles hundreds of concept images from its vision of the American Revolution. Character design is briefly covered, but most of the focus of the book is, more than understandably, on the game's detailed, expansive environments.

The book covers the minimalist, future setting to the game's revolutionary oceanic levels, via authentic visions of Boston and New York. Text is kept to a minimum, enabling artwork to really shine through. There's no discussion of the influences on the game's art style, though, which is a bit of a missed opportunity. Nevertheless, this is a compelling and inspiring collection of incredible images.

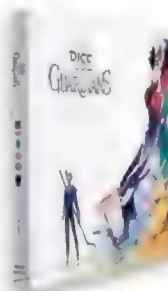
The Art of Rise of the Guardians

Author Ramin Zahed

Publisher Titan Books **Price** £25

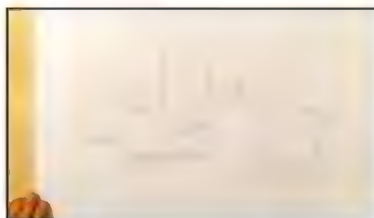
Available Now

RATING

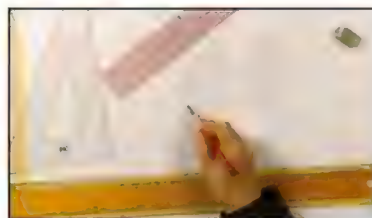


DreamWorks' take on fairy tale mythology depicts a world in which Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny fight back against the Nightmare King. Despite its family-friendly subject matter, it's apparent from the book that the film takes a darker, more adult approach, with Miyazaki-esque characters and locations. As with How to Train your Dragon, DreamWorks Animation has distanced itself from Pixar's cuter aesthetic and style.

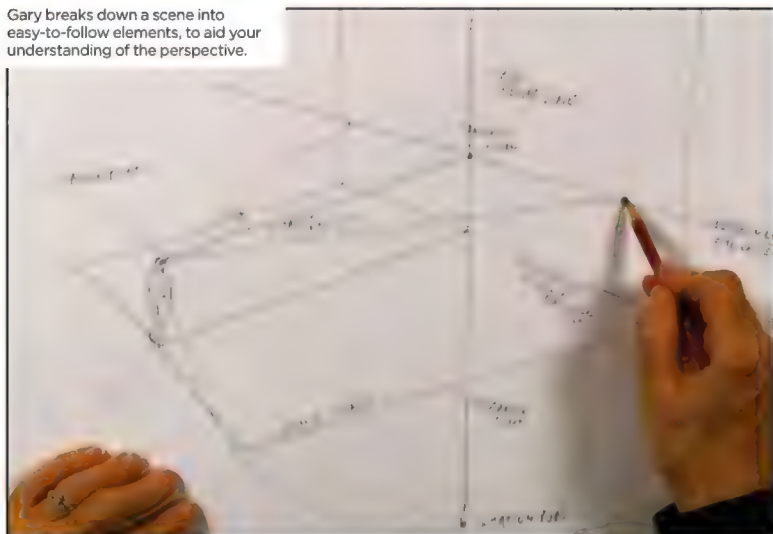
It's one of the best books of its type, combining well-written text with beautiful sketches and renders. There's also an informative pull-out page which breaks down a single sequence, and Santa himself - aka Alec Baldwin - contributes a surprisingly eloquent foreword.



Gary breaks down a scene into easy-to-follow elements, to aid your understanding of the perspective.



A methodical approach is key if you're to grasp the fundamentals of perspective.



Fundamentals of Perspective 1

TO THE POINT Illustrator and instructor Gary Meyer talks horizon lines and vanishing points as he demystifies the rules of technical composition

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** \$49 **Format** DVD/Download **Web** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

Most artists starting out prefer to keep things simple, restraining their compositions to a figure against a backdrop, for instance. Even after you've got the hang of basic anatomy and painting techniques, the thought of attempting a more ambitious scene with several figures and a true sense of depth can be intimidating.

Gary Meyer's series of three videos aims to help you overcome those fears as you learn how to apply perspective to your compositions. The volumes respectively focus on one-, two- and three-point perspective (with some inevitable overlap). In this first volume, Gary starts with the most basic principles for depicting depth, then methodically adds guidelines to build a cohesive framework that you can apply to any scene.

He continually applies the principles to real-world situations, borne out of his commercial experience. You'll see, for example, how to calculate the relative scale of people standing at different points, or how to work out where to

draw the back of a foreshortened object. In his most ambitious set-piece, Gary draws his own studio in one-point perspective, showing how he calculates where to place each of a rich variety of objects in the room.

If you've never formally studied perspective, though, it's Gary's simplest ideas that will affect the way you work the most. He relates working components such as the horizon line and the vanishing point to the onlooker whose eyes you're viewing the scene through. Understanding where the eye-level is within your scene enables you to take the first decisions that shape your composition.

In this first volume, at least, Gary doesn't often take the logical next step of suggesting how to apply your knowledge in creative ways. For example, choosing between a high eye-level and a low one will affect the emotional tone of your composition. Gary's focus is a purely technical one – although perhaps the greatest benefit of absorbing these lessons through video rather than in print is that technical never means dry. ●

DETAILS

Topics covered

- Perspective basics
- Depicting scale in perspective
- Drawing rectangles three ways
- Real-world examples
- Drawing a room to scale
- Transferring scale in perspective

Length

186 minutes

Rating



ARTIST PROFILE

GARY MEYER

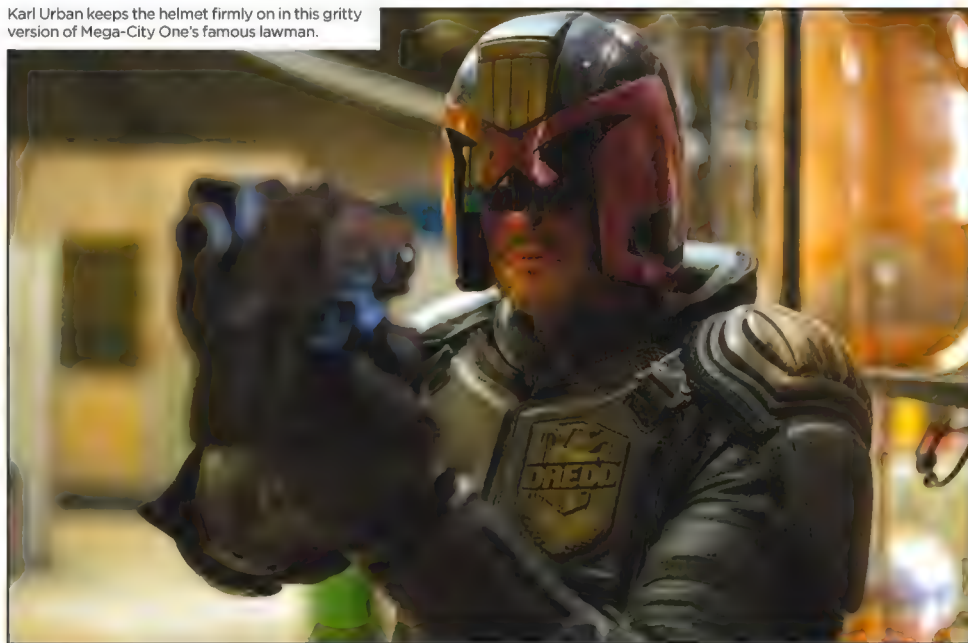
Gary is an instructor at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, where he's worked for 23 years. Gary has received 17 Great Teacher Awards, elected by graduating classes. His teaching experience includes illustration, sketching, visual communication, portraiture, architectural design and matte painting. Gary has also taught at Otis College of Art and Design, Universal Studios Design and Development and the Animation Institute of Los Angeles. His commercial clients include major



aircraft companies, movie studios, Reader's Digest, Random House and Warner Books.

www.garymeyerillustration.com

Karl Urban keeps the helmet firmly on in this gritty version of Mega-City One's famous lawman.



© 2011 - DNA Films Limited (UK) & Kalam Pictures (Pty) Limited (South Africa)

Dredd 3D

JUDGEMENT TIME This take on 2000 AD's core character offers a surprisingly aesthetic angle on a belting grime-and-guts B-movie story

Distributor Entertainment in Video **Certificate** 18
Price £15 (DVD, Blu-ray 3D and Blu-ray) **Available** 14 January

Judging by its poster art and DVD cover, you might think Chris Nolan had a hand in this film's style. Aesthetically though, *Dredd 3D* is much more than a 'dark' take on a brutal comic character. At times it's actually quite beautiful!

Director Peter Travis's visual aims are revealed in the opening scene. An aerial shot skims over scorched wasteland, settling on Mega-City One: a cramped city sprawl with supersized tower blocks piercing the sky.

As Judge Dredd (a gravelly throated Karl Urban) describes a world of disorder, the director lingers on the cityscape, exactly as visualised by concept artists Neil Miller (www.neilmillervfx.com) and Jock (www.bit.ly/ix-jock), until, it seems, they think we're ready to take a closer look.

Down at city level, Dredd has been tasked to assess rookie judge, and psychic mutant, Anderson (Olivia Thirlby). Dispatched to investigate a triple murder, they direct their Lawmaster motorbikes towards the Peach Trees Mega block. This is an

800 meter-tall hotbed of lawless chaos and the production centre of the psychedelic drug Slo-Mo, all controlled by the merciless gang leader Ma-Ma (Lena Headey).

As we enter Peach Trees, cinematographer Anthony Dod Mantle decks the grimy corridors and graffitied walls with saturated oranges,

reds, greens and purples: it's a living, pulsating concrete jungle. With the judges locked in by Ma-Ma, Alex Garland's taut script inches them up the Mega block, through increasingly violent scrapes to a final, vertiginous showdown.

For a film crew that clearly respects the original comic - Judge Dredd creator John

Wagner had input in the script - this is no slavish fan boy project. The film's imaginative indulgence in gory violence, the brilliant sense of place in the enclosed Peach Trees, and its unified saturated visuals make this a comic-based film with an identity befitting its eponymous hero. **RATING**



DAREN HORLEY

The concept artist talks about visualising early Dredd ideas

At what stage did you work on Dredd and what was the brief?

At a very early stage. I think at that time the studio was still looking to raise finance for the project, so they came to Framestore (the London visual effects facility) to get some of the resident artists to come up with a collection of images that they could use to help pitch the idea.

The brief that we were given was for something that stayed reasonably true to the spirit of the original comic, and that had a very gritty, urban edge to it. Not overly science fiction, more something that reflected the dark future that they were looking for in this version of Mega-City One.

How did you go about creating these pieces?

Step one of the concept process is to look at images that relate to what you're designing, so for this film that was photography of brutalist architecture. I remember that Russia and Eastern Europe seemed to supply a lot of inspiration on that front. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Los Angeles provided references of concrete raised freeways.

Concept art is always an extremely fast turnaround. So I often use photo images as a start, kind of like priming the canvas, ready for paint over the top. Juxtaposing textures and blending with painted detail.

What elements of your input made it right through to the finished film?

For Dredd's uniform, the film-maker's brief at that point was that it should be reminiscent of riot police, so I was looking at body armour from various police and military forces. I wanted the name badge to be prominent, but still functional. I bypassed the gold chain from the comics and instead chose to embed the badge in to the chest armour. I'm glad that made it through.



Daren's worked on a number of blockbusters, including the Harry Potter franchise and Iron Man 3.

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LOCATION Tønsberg, Norway

RECENT PROJECT

Website

Rock Pocket Games

MAKING NOISE Four years out of the blocks, this busy Norwegian iOS games developer is eyeing up the console market

Inspired by the launch of the App Store in mid-2008, designer and developer Ivan Moen set up Rock Pocket Games (RPG) to produce games that "rock your pocket". It all started with a simple connect-the-dots title called **Laser Puzzle**, created by night while he developed e-learning for the chemical industry by day.



The villain and main antagonist of *Oliver&Spike*, Nox has a severe inferiority complex that drives him to desire godlike status.

These two parallel lives (he hated the day job with a passion) continued for over a year until, in 2010, Ivan finally bit the bullet and threw himself into RPG full-time. Soon, he was hiring – and over the past couple of years has built up a 10-strong team with 16 games already under its belt.

Proudly uncompromising about quality, the studio has also invested in its own modelling tools – including a terrain painting and sculpting tool for



This fearsome, buck-toothed, one-eyed rabbit warrior is part of the Wabas tribe in *Oliver&Spike*.

Unity – to maximise efficiency while aiming to keep standards high.

"In a small studio like ours, everyone has to be very flexible," says Ivan, "but generally we have one developer assigned to a specific project while the 3D artists, the concept artist and our animator work on all projects simultaneously. Generally, though, we're a team and a lot of discussions are done as a group. No one likes to be a number!"

The studio's art director and artist Henning Ludvigsen agrees



wholeheartedly on the importance of a well-oiled team dynamic. "Many of our smaller projects last from one to two months,"



As a Dimension Jumper, Oliver can move at will between different worlds such as these.

ARTIST INTERVIEW CONSTANTINE KRYSTALLIS

The lead character animator talks artistic freedom and new cultures

How much freedom do you have when working on a project?

Freedom is relative when it comes to client projects. We always enjoy exploring ideas and sometimes we are completely free to do what we feel is fitting. However, freedom is not always safe or efficient and I count on the art director to define the boundaries within which I can move artistically. A canvas has specific dimensions within which you can create. The same thing should apply to a project where many disciplines and artists are brought together.

Why would you recommend working at Rock Pocket Games?

It's a great place to work! Besides the fact that the people are great and highly talented, the projects are exciting and there's constant renewal in the work. There is always a plan accompanied by an urge to move forward and excel, raising the bar to an international level. The size of the company is just right, which makes you feel more like a member of a team than a number on a payroll.

How important is it to experience working in different countries and what has this brought to Rock Pocket Games?

Working in different countries gives a person greater exposure to various cultures, environments and ways of thought, which broadens his/her perspective and adds to creativity. A person with a broader collection of experiences will probably enjoy more moments of inspiration. Furthermore, people have impressions about other countries and experiencing them busts the myths. Our line of work is very similar all around the globe and the knowledge of that helps a person get rid of regrets and false hopes of working in a dream country. All these things add to the artist and, in turn, the company.



Constantine is a 3D character animator with generalist skills and, he says, "a high regard to detail and precision".

www.animationtime.com



PROJECTS iOS: The Package, iOS: Monster Mania, iOS: Mr Melk Ping Pong, Mr Melk Winter Games

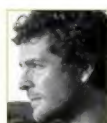
Eccentric, playful inventor type Cornelius Conrad McSplice, aka The Professor, is adoptive grandfather to Oliver in Oliver&Spike.



The title characters in Oliver&Spike: curious prankster Oliver, and his fiercely loyal dog - who'll follow him even into other dimensions.



“Anyone wanting to break into this field will need passion, curiosity, fantasy and plenty of dedication”



he says, “so we usually start off by settling on a unified vision that we communicate to concept artist Davide Tosello. He'll then dish up some really cool concept artwork, which always takes things a few steps further than we initially had in mind. This is the perk of having a concept artist like Davide, who's a living one-man global superpower of his own.”

Primitive Wabas fight with spears, bows and arrows, and have a flat social hierarchy - the chief (shown here with two companions) has no special privileges.



RPG's team of artists will create 2D and 3D assets based on Davide's concepts and initial ideas, before the animators take over to breathe life into any characters and assets that need motion. According to Davide himself, anyone wanting to break into his particular field will need to have passion, curiosity, fantasy and plenty of dedication.

“Analyse the work of professional artists in detail to understand their style, how they work and why they make certain choices,” is his advice. “Learn from them, and slowly create your own style. Learn how to use pencils, oil paints and acrylics, but don't stop at those - there's a whole digital world waiting for you. And never forget that it should always remain a passion, not a job.”

Rock Pocket Games released a total of seven titles last year, many of them in the last quarter, to make the most of the lucrative Christmas market. Its boldest move yet, however, is to plough resources into ambitious console/PC/Mac adventure platform puzzler Oliver&Spike: Dimension Jumpers, at a time when many small studios are deserting console in favour of quick-wins on mobile. “We want to get out of our comfort zone and gain more experience, [and] we're all hell-bent on this happening,” grins Henning, adding: “So it will.”

Website

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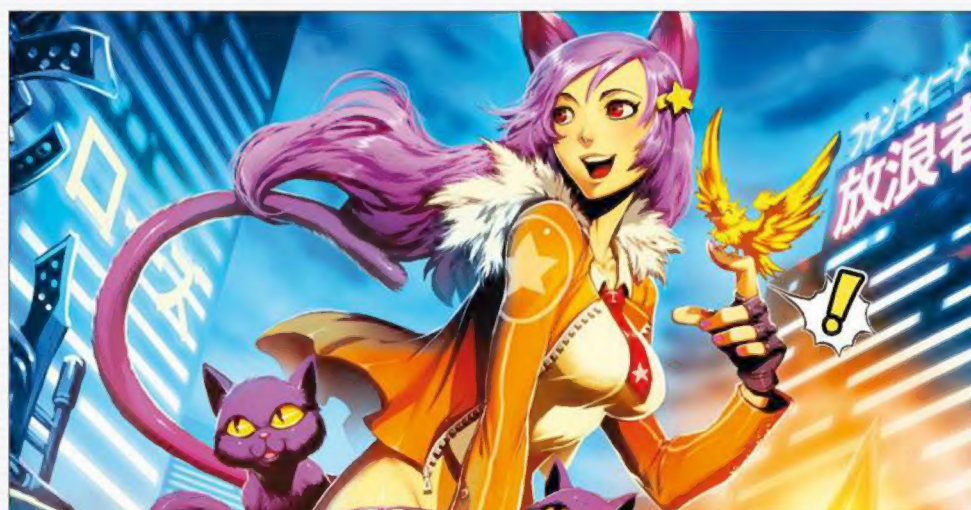
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2D

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey concept art



Explore Middle-earth with this exclusive look at John Howe and Alan Lee's Hobbit concept art

For decades John Howe and Alan Lee have shaped how we visualise J.R.R. Tolkien's *Middle-earth*.

As well as being lead concept artists on Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings trilogy, they've also spent the last three years in charge of The Hobbit - from Wargs to Goblin caves.

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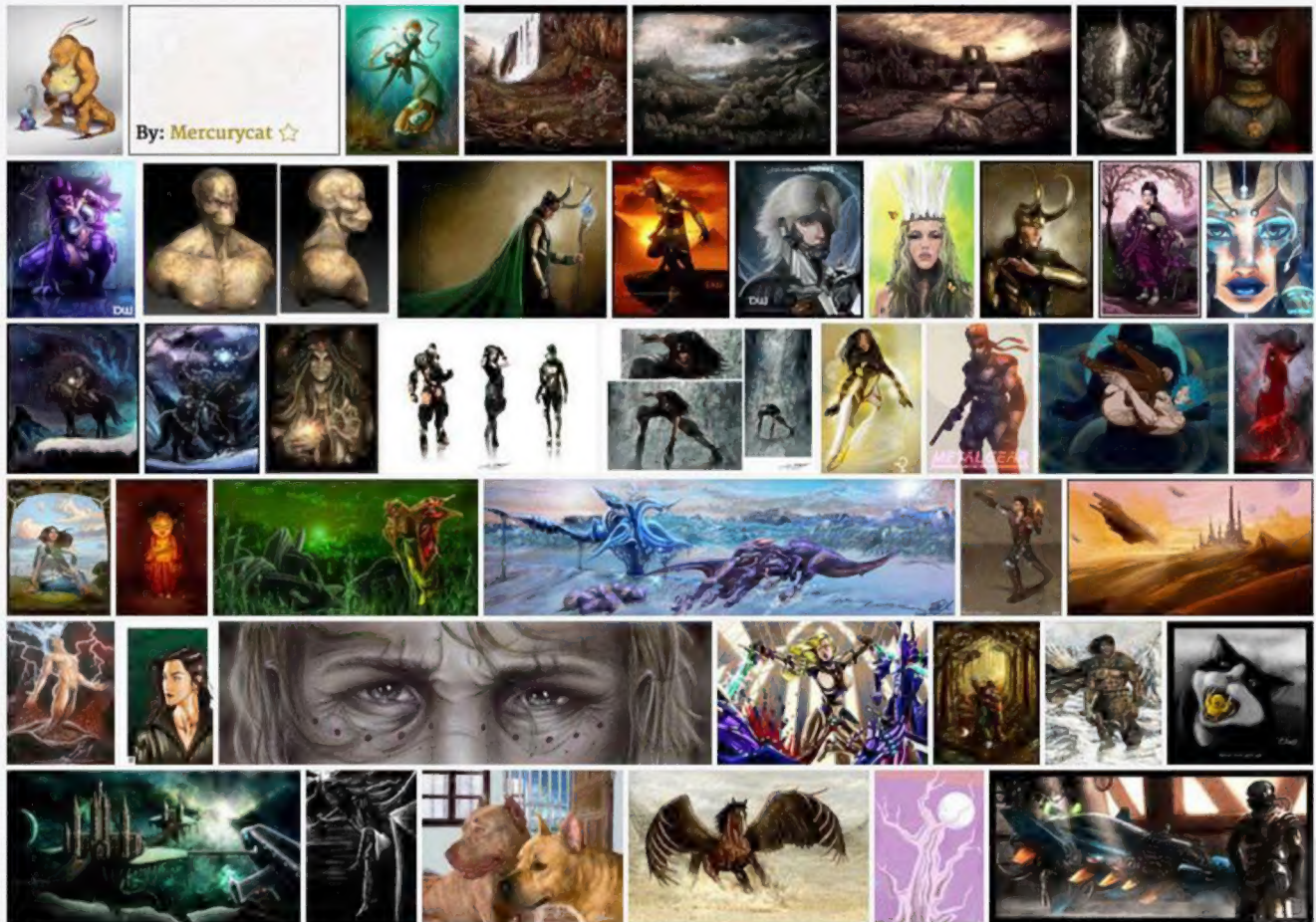
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School ads usually feature their best work to show what you may achieve if you attend. We will get back to that. But right now, I would like to reach out to the really smart, really driven, and really creative people out there who want to make computer animation a career. You should know that the DAVE School was created for you.

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